LOVE

OCT.

SHORT STORIES

Buy WAR BONDS AND STAMPS FOR VICTORY

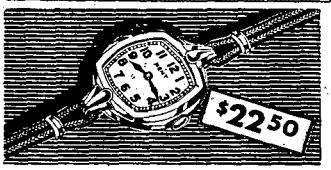
Heartbreak IN HAVANA

by VINA LAWRENCE

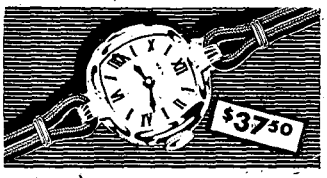
PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Jewelry ON EASY TERMS

SEND $1 — PAY BALANCE OF 1/3 DOWN — AFTER EXAMINATION



P214—Dainty Kent Watch for Ladies. 7 jewels; 10K yellow rolled gold plate.
Send $1, pay $6.50 after examination, $5 a month



T683—Ladies' 17 jewel Benrus Watch. 10K yellow rolled gold plate.
Send $1, pay $11.50 after examination, $5 a month

C842—Ladies' Twin Ring; 2 diamonds. 14K white gold.
Send $1, pay $13.17 after examination, $5 a month

1404—Man's Initial Ring. Initial on onyx. 14K yellow gold.
Send $1, pay $7.25 after examination, $5 a month

D214—Man's Twin Ring. 2 diamonds; simulated ruby or sapphire.
Send $1, pay $18.98 after examination, $5 a month

"I'LL GIVE YOU many months to pay."

"I'LL GIVE YOU the privilege of examination before acceptance."

"I'LL GIVE YOU a 15-day trial."

"I'LL GIVE YOU your money back if not satisfied."

Yes, I want to prove to you that we give True Value in Quality Merchandise. I have won thousands of friends in every state in the Union by giving them a fair deal. I want your friendship, too. Will you give me a trial?

I'll send any article you want for examination and 15-day trial . . . plenty of time to convince yourself as to its value. Just indicate your choice on the coupon below, giving number and price. Send it with a dollar bill and a brief note telling me who you are, where you work, your draft classification, age, and a few other facts about yourself.

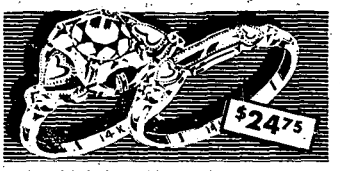
I'll open an account for you and send your selection by express, subject to examination. If satisfied, you pay expressman the balance of the 1/3 of the purchase price (required by Federal Regulations), otherwise return the selection and your $1 will be refunded. If accepted, I'll give you 15 days' trial and if you are not satisfied, return selection and I'll refund your money promptly. All prices include Federal Tax. Send your order to me personally.

Jim Feeney
Sales Mgr.

FREE TO ADULTS: A postcard brings 32-page Catalog of Diamonds, Watches, and Jewelry. No obligation.

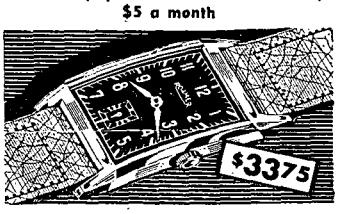
A105—Quality Diamond Solitaire. 14K yellow gold.
Send $1, pay $10 after examination, $5 a month

A402—Large brilliant Solitaire. 14K yellow or 18K white gold.
Send $1, pay $25.65 after examination, $5 a month



A4—Bridal Set. Diamond Engagement Ring; matching Wedding Ring. 14K yellow gold.
Send $1, pay $7.25 after examination, $5 a month

A320—Bridal Set. Select Diamond Engagement Ring; matching Wedding Ring. 14K yellow gold.
Send $1, pay $17.33 after examination, $5 a month



K104—15 jewel Watch for Men. Reverse dial. Steel case.
Send $1, pay $10.25 after examination, $5 a month

JIM FEENEY
L. W. Sweet, 1670 Broadway (Dept. 13-K)
New York, N. Y.

Enclosed find $1 deposit. Send me No._____ Price $_____. After examination, I agree to pay $_____ and $5.00 monthly thereafter until full price is paid, otherwise I'll return selection and you will refund my dollar.

NAME_____

ADDRESS_____

CITY_____ STATE_____

L. W. Sweet

MAIL ORDER DIVISION OF FINLAY STRAUS, Inc.
Dept. 13-K 1670 BROADWAY, NEW YORK

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

GET BOTH FREE

SAMPLE LESSON

64 PAGE BOOK

I will send you this FREE Lesson, "Getting Acquainted With Receiver Servicing," to show you how practical it is to train for Radio in spare time. It's a valuable lesson. Study it—keep it—use it—without obligation! Tells how "Superhet" Receivers work, gives hints on Receiver Servicing, Locating Defects, Repair of Loudspeaker, I. F. Transformer, Gang Tuning Condenser, etc. 31 illustrations. And with it I'll send my FREE 64-page book, "Win Rich Rewards in Radio." It describes many fascinating jobs Radio offers, explains how N.R.I. trains you for good pay in Radio!

See How I Train You at Home in Spare Time to BE A RADIO TECHNICIAN

J. E. SMITH
President
National Radio Institute
Established 28 Years

I Trained These Men

$10 a Week in Spare Time

"I repaired some Radio sets when I was on my tenth lesson. I really don't see how you can give so much for such a small amount of money. I made $600 in a year and a half, and I have made an average of $10 a week—just spare time." JOHN JERRY, 1337 Kalamath St., Denver, Colorado.

$200 a Month in Own Business

"For several years I have been in business for myself making around $200 a month. Business has steadily increased. I have N.R.I. to thank for my start in this field." ARLIE J. FROEHNER, 300 W. Texas Ave., Goose Creek, Texas.

Lieutenant in Signal Corps

"I cannot divulge any information as to my type of work, but I can say that N.R.I. training is certainly coming in mighty handy these days." (Name and address omitted for military reasons.)

Extra Pay in Army, Navy, Too

Men likely to go into military service, soldiers, sailors, marines, should mail the coupon now! Learning Radio helps men get extra rank, extra prestige, more interesting duties, MUCH HIGHER PAY. Also prepares for good Radio jobs after service ends. Over 1,700 service men now enrolled.

Here's your chance to get a good job in a busy wartime field with a bright peacetime future! There is a real shortage today of trained Radio Technicians and Operators. So mail the Coupon for my FREE Lesson and 64-page, illustrated book, "Win Rich Rewards in Radio." See for yourself how you can train for Radio at home in spare time!

More Radio Technicians and Operators Now Make $50 a Week Than Ever Before

There's a big shortage of capable Radio Technicians and Operators because so many have joined the Army and Navy. Fixing Radios pays better now than for years. With new Radios out of production, fixing old sets, which were formerly traded in, adds greatly to the normal number of servicing jobs.

Broadcasting Stations, Aviation and Police Radio, Ship Radio and other communications branches are scrambling for Operators and Technicians to replace men who are leaving. You may never see a time again when it will be so easy to get started in this fascinating field. The Government too needs hundreds of competent civilian and enlisted Radio men and women. Radio factories, now working on Government orders for radio equipment, employ trained men. And think of the NEW jobs Television, Frequency Modulation, Electronics and other Radio developments will open after the war! This is the sort of opportunity you shouldn't pass up.

Many Beginners Soon Make $5, $10 a Week Extra in Spare Time

There's probably an opportunity right in your neighborhood to make money in spare time fixing Radios. I'll give you the training that has started hundreds of N.R.I. students making $5, $10 a week extra within a few months after enrolling. The N.R.I. Course isn't something just prepared to take advantage of the present market for technical books and courses. It has been tried, tested, developed, perfected during the 28 years we have been teaching Radio.

Start Now Toward Radio's Rich Rewards!

MAIL THE COUPON! I'll send you the FREE Lesson and 64-page, illustrated book. No obligation. You'll see what Radio offers YOU. You'll read more than 100 letters from men I trained telling what they are doing, earning. And you'll have my FREE lesson to keep. No salesman will call. Mail the Coupon NOW in envelope or pasted on penny postcard!—J. E. SMITH, President, Dept. 3KS9, National Radio Institute, Washington 9, D. C.

TRAINING MEN FOR VITAL RADIO JOBS

GOOD FOR BOTH 64 PAGE BOOK SAMPLE LESSON FREE

Mr. J. E. Smith, President, Dept. 3KS9
NATIONAL RADIO INSTITUTE, Washington 9, D. C.

Mail me FREE, without obligation, your Sample Lesson and 64-page book, "Win Rich Rewards in Radio." (No Salesman will call. Please write plainly.)

Name ..... Age.....

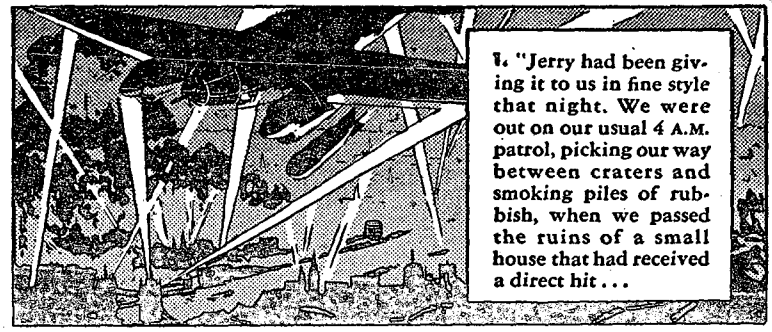
Address .....

City ..... State.....4FR

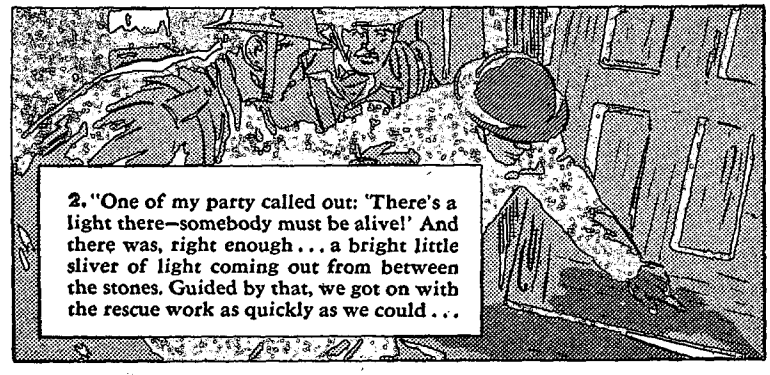
PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LONDON'S "MIDGET MARSHAL" TELLS BOMBING THRILLER!

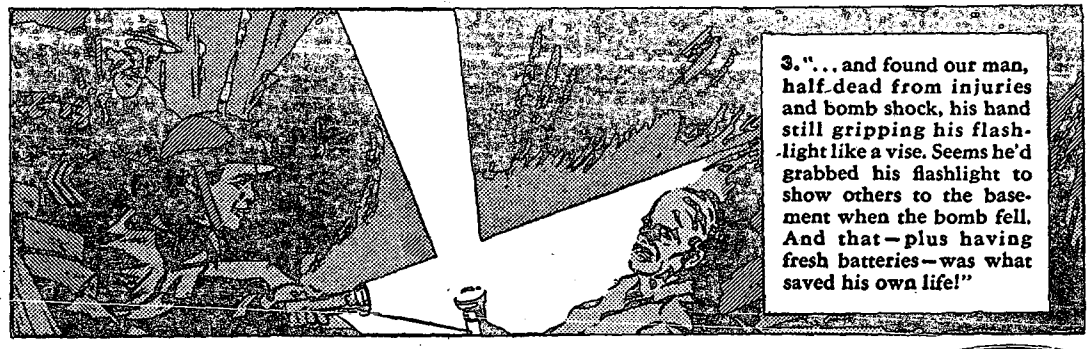
This true story of the blitz was told to a war correspondent by Michael Davies, Chief Shelter Marshal, London Area. Mr. Davies is famous as the smallest Air Marshal in England; his height is 3 ft. 6 in. Mr. Davies was a practicing optometrist before the war, was active in organizing youth camps, is now in charge of one of the largest air shelters in England. The shelter extends 4 acres and includes 4 miles of underground corridors. Complete with interior radio communications and sixty-five large sleeping bays, it can normally house 10,000 people—in a pinch, 14,000. Over one and a half million bricks were used to build the blast wall.



1. "Jerry had been giving it to us in fine style that night. We were out on our usual 4 A.M. patrol, picking our way between craters and smoking piles of rubbish, when we passed the ruins of a small house that had received a direct hit . . .



2. "One of my party called out: 'There's a light there—somebody must be alive!' And there was, right enough . . . a bright little sliver of light coming out from between the stones. Guided by that, we got on with the rescue work as quickly as we could . . .



3. ". . . and found our man, half-dead from injuries and bomb shock, his hand still gripping his flashlight like a vise. Seems he'd grabbed his flashlight to show others to the basement when the bomb fell. And that—plus having fresh batteries—was what saved his own life!"

PLEASE NOTE: Don't blame your dealer if he's out of "Eveready" flashlight batteries. The Armed Forces are taking enormous quantities, and the war industries with the highest priority ratings are taking the rest.

WRITE FOR YOUR FREE COPY of "You and the War," the new O.C.D. guidebook which tells you how you can train and what you can do to help win the war. There's a job, and an important one, for every man, woman and child in America! Address National Carbon Company, Dept. BT 30 East 42nd St., New York 17, N. Y.

NATIONAL CARBON COMPANY, INC.
30 East 42nd Street, New York
Unit of Union Carbide and Carbon Corporation

UCC

The word "Eveready" is a registered trade-mark of National Carbon Company, Inc.

FRESH BATTERIES LAST LONGER . . . Look for the DATE-LINE

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

10 CENTS

LOVE SHORT STORIES

Vol. 11, No. 2 October, 1943

STORIES

HEARTBREAK IN HAVANA.....**Vina Lawrence** 10
Voodoo magic and a jealous suitor threatened Carlotta's life.

RINGS ON HER FINGERS.....**Hope Campbell** 29
Jingles thought a career as a glamour girl was more important than marriage.

WEDDING FOR THREE.....**Adele Hall** 38
A wedding can mean both happiness and heartbreak when two girls are engaged to one man.

WHAT'S IN A KISS?.....**Helen Hibbard Dau** 44
Susan's disappointed suitor found a way to share her dates with her fiancé.

DON'T CALL ME SWEETHEART.....**Julie Paine** 56
Is marriage on the rebound ever the cure for a broken heart?

RENDEZVOUS FOR DREAMS.....**Nancy Crosby** 70
A handsome Army captain tried to change Diane's mind about love at first sight.

NO PROOF NEEDED.....**Tugar DePass** 80
Could Kirk fall in love with the girl who ruined his best friend's life?

A REASONABLE FACSIMILE OF LOVE....**Margery Woods** 88
Jinny had to pretend she was married to convince Keith she was grown-up.

BARGAIN IN BRIDEGROOMS.....**Doris Knight** 100
Money can buy off a mercenary fiancée, but can it buy a man's heart?

VERSE

OCTOBER .....**Christie Lund Coles** 8
LONGING .....**Merryl Lee** 41
GIFT.....**Catherine E. Berry** 79
OUT OF MY CONTROL.....**Harriet A. Bradfield** 79

FEATURES

NEXT MONTH..... 6
PEN PALS.....**Dora Dean, Hostess** 110

ALL STORIES NEW

Published monthly by Fictioneers, Inc., a division of Popular Publications, Inc., 2256 Grove Street, Chicago, Illinois. Editorial and executive offices, 205 East 42nd Street, New York 17, N. Y. Entered as second class matter July 12, 1940, at the post office at Chicago, Illinois, under the Act of March 3, 1879. Copyright 1943 by Fictioneers, Inc. The publishers cannot accept responsibility for return of unsolicited manuscripts, although care will be exercised in handling them. All rights reserved under Pan American copyright convention. *Single copy price 10c. Yearly subscription in U.S.A., $1.20. Foreign postage 75c extra. Printed in U.S.A.*

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Next Month

Army Heartbeat

By KATHRYN KEELEY

"DON'T you know I fell in love with you the first moment I saw you?" Tex said. "Don't you know that as soon as I recover from this wound I'm going to claim you? And when I do, Anne, it will be forever."

But Anne hadn't realized that Tex loved her. He had been just one more patient to her until Dr. Craig Chase made his fantastic prescription for Tex's illness, and now—

"Tex, could I be falling in love with you?" Anne asked softly.

And then she remembered! Involuntarily she spoke aloud:

"Leila Strong!"

Suddenly Tex grasped her arm roughly. He said abruptly, "What do you know of Leila Strong?"

She couldn't lie before that strange look of deadly earnestness on Tex's face. She said falteringly, "Just that she is the girl who has written to you. The girl you are going to marry."

He gripped her wrist with a hurting pressure. He searched her white face with questioning eyes. "Leila has never written to me since I have been here. I have never spoken her name. How did you know it?"

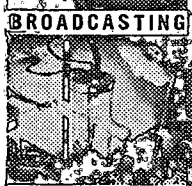
But how could Anne answer that question? If she told him that her kisses were part of a prescription that was to make him well again so that he could marry Leila Strong he would hate her. But if she didn't answer it, would he find out for himself?

In the November issue of Love Short Stories Kathryn Keeley solves this problem of a nurse who betrayed her own heart to save the life of a gallant soldier. On sale October 8th.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

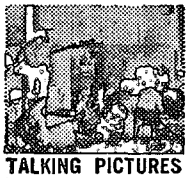
New! COYNE "Learn-by-Doing" Shop Course

RADIO Operating and ELECTRONICS



GET READY NOW FOR A GREAT VICTORY FUTURE

I'll Finance Your Training



War has created tremendous opportunities for men in RADIO OPERATING AND ELECTRONICS. Here is the practical "Learn-by-Doing" shop training in this big field. Not by correspondence, but **actual experience on real Radio and Electronic apparatus.**

START NOW—PAY LATER!

I make it **easy** for you to come to Chicago for my practical training. Don't let lack of money hold you back! You can pay tuition AFTER YOU GRADUATE. I'll even help you secure **part-time work** while at Coyne to help pay living expenses. My plan has aided thousands — **coupon brings complete details.**

Prepares for Gov't License

Many of the better Radio jobs require U. S. Govt. license. Coyne has prepared hundreds of men for this test. Our graduates hold good positions in broadcast stations, air transport, police radio and motion picture studios.

You'll Receive Personal Instructions on Fascinating Radio and Electronic Apparatus

It's the thrill of a lifetime when you first operate the amazing variety of up-to-the-minute Radio and Electronic equipment at Coyne! Experts show you each step, train you thoroughly. You'll learn to send Code rapidly — do actual trouble-shooting on Television, short-wave and electronic devices. With this training you get my LIFETIME EMPLOYMENT SERVICE. I train you for a real job, then help you get it!

H. C. LEWIS, President

COYNE ELECTRICAL SCHOOL
RADIO DIVISION
500 S. Paulina Street, Dept. 73-5H, Chicago, Ill.

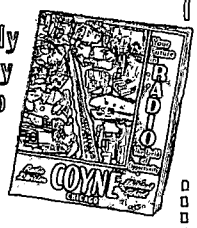
SEND FOR MY FREE BOOK!

Find out all about the sensational new future for Coyne-trained Radio Operators and Industrial Electronic Specialists. My FREE BOOK is full of photos and job information. There's a place in this vast field for YOU. Age, lack of experience bars no one. Coyne has been training men 44 years—is nationally famous. Act now. Use handy coupon. No obligation; no salesman will call. Don't delay. Send it today!

Get the FACTS!

See How Easily YOU can get my Radio Shop Training!

MAIL COUPON



H. C. LEWIS, Pres.,
RADIO DIVISION
COYNE ELECTRICAL SCHOOL, Dept. 73-5H
500 South Paulina St., Chicago, Ill.

Without obligating me, send your FREE BOOK, "Your Future in RADIO", and tell me about your "Pay-After-Graduation" plan.

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

CITY.....STATE.....

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

October

October lies upon the hills
In red and amber splendor,
And all the trails that we have trod
Implore me to remember.

The day we climbed the mountain-side
With clinging finger-tips,
The grove of maples where we paused
And found each other's lips.

The silver evening when we stood
And wished upon a star,
I'm wishing on it here tonight
For you who've gone so far.

October lies upon the hills
And all the trails we've known,
The moon is far, the wind is chill
Since I walk here alone.

By Christie Lund Coles

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LESS THAN 25¢ A WEEK

Buys UP TO $1,000 safe LIFE INSURANCE

Why You Can Buy AMERICAN LIFE INSURANCE With Confidence

Exceptionally Strong Financial Position

For each $100.00 of obligations AMERICAN LIFE has $109.15 in resources . . . a greater margin of assets than the average shown for leading companies!

Operates Under Rigid State Insurance Laws

Deposits in Government bonds and approved securities are made with the State Insurance Department for the protection of *all* policyholders.

Noted for Its Sound Management

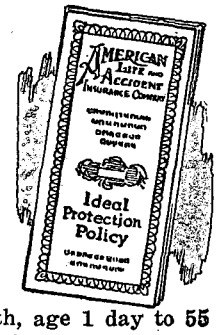
An old - established stipulated premium company (incorporated July 2, 1925), AMERICAN LIFE is noted for prompt payment of claims and sound management.

S. B. HUNT
President

Carries Dunne's Highest Rating

Dunne's Insurance Report gives AMERICAN LIFE top rating, A+ (Excellent), and recommends company as being "entirely worthy of public confidence."

Special 20-Pay Life Policy with Extra Liberal Features — ½ Regular Rate First 5 Years



Imagine being able to get *safe*, liberal life insurance protection for only $1.00 a month (less than 25c a week). And what a policy! No premiums to pay after 20 years. Generous *cash* and *loan values*. Popular *double indemnity* feature at no extra cost. Attached $100.00 sight draft for emergency use, and many other extra liberal features you'll like. Issued to any man, woman or child in good health, age 1 day to 55 years. Amount of policy depends upon age.

NO DOCTOR'S EXAMINATION—No Agent or Collector Will Call

No doctor's examination required when you apply for this policy. No long application to fill out. No embarrassing questions to answer. No red tape. No agent or collector will ever call on you. Everything handled by *mail*.

Postman Takes Place of Agent — YOU SAVE BY MAIL!

Although this company maintains agency service in more than 100 cities, many persons prefer to apply for AMERICAN LIFE insurance protection and benefits this quick, easy, inexpensive way. You, too, can save money by dealing direct with our *Mail Service Department!*

SEND NO MONEY — Your Policy Mailed for FREE INSPECTION

You don't have to risk one penny to get this policy for 10 DAYS' FREE INSPECTION! Examine it carefully—compare its liberal features—then decide whether you want to keep it. No obligation to buy. Nothing to lose. So DON'T DELAY. Fill out and mail the coupon *today!*

MAIL THIS COUPON NOW

More than $30,000,000 worth of this *low cost* insurance already issued by AMERICAN LIFE. Without cost or obligation, get your *actual policy* for 10 days' free inspection!

FREE INSPECTION OFFER

AMERICAN LIFE & ACC. INSURANCE CO.
230 American Life Bldg. ○ St. Louis, Mo.

Full Name .....
(Please print)
Address..... City & State.....
Date of Birth— Color
Year.....Mo.....Day.....or Race.....
Sex..... Height..... Weight..... Age.....
Describe Occupation.....
.....
Name of Beneficiary Relationship
Amount of Ins.
Are you in good health?.....Now Carried.....
Check if under Age 46 and Double Amount is wanted. ☐ .....
Signature of Applicant or Parent

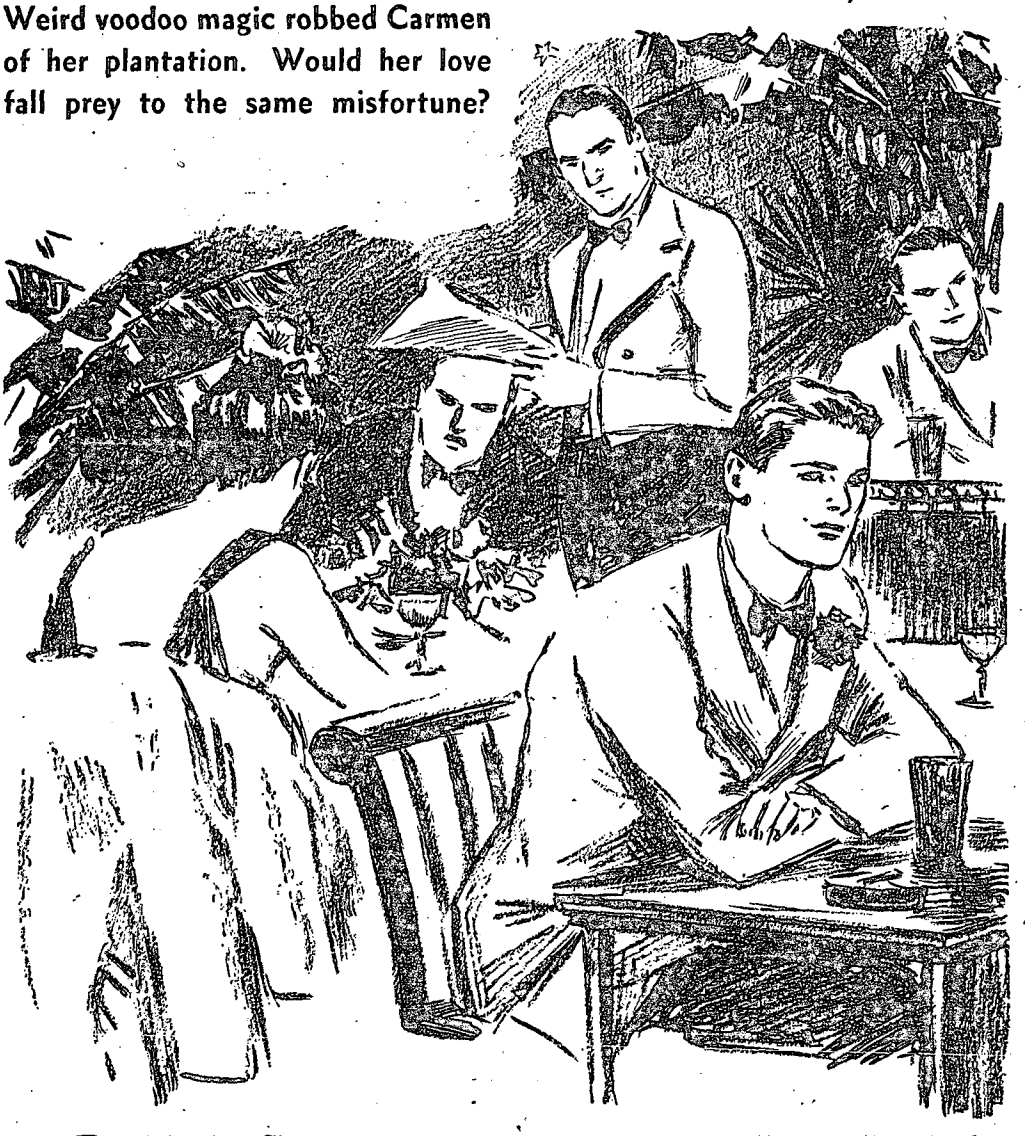
Printed in U. S. A.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

HEARTBREAK

By VINA

Weird voodoo magic robbed Carmen of her plantation. Would her love fall prey to the same misfortune?



"CIGARS! Cigarettes! Souvenirs!" Carlotta cried in her husky little voice. She had said those words until they came out in a mechanical lilt, as if from a beautiful talking doll. She stopped now, before the big, bronzed, sandy-headed man from

She dared not let this man flirt with her, because Gig would hear of it when he came home.

New York. She couldn't avoid him any longer.

"Cigarettes, *Senor?*" she asked. "Or, maybe so, a souvenir of Havana? Here

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

IN HAVANA

LAWRENCE

is a leetle cloth dog. Red and white striped, and he barks. Or if you want something to take home to your wife, here is a tiny flask of perfume, very rare and expensive in New York."

She stopped her little sales talk, spoken in broken English and Spanish, mixed to give atmosphere to her character as a Cuban cigarette girl. She stopped, for the man was looking at her with electric blue eyes that seemed to make the air crackle.

Looking at her, he was openly admiring, faintly amused, challenging. He took her in from the heavy pale golden curls

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that hung in childish disarray about her young face, down the curves of her brief black satin and scarlet lace costume, to the toes of her stilt-heeled red sandals.

Her own eyes, violet-black and a little frightened, stared back at him defiantly. Well, let him look! This costume was made to attract attention to her. This was her job, the only job she had. So stare! Stare!

"Stare!" her black eyes seemed to shout but she said nothing. Her ivory back and shoulders were bare, the black satin fitted like a basque to the waist, then flared out into a short, very full powder-puff of a skirt that was made up of dozens of black and scarlet ruffles. Her long, slender, shapely legs were clad in black net hose and there was a heavily linked slave bracelet on her left ankle just above the red strap of her sandal. Gig Van Ness's slave bracelet.

"To remind you that you belong to me," Gig had said when he gave it to her. Gig whose brown eyes could blaze with the white heat of anger, whose suavely handsome features hid the fact that he was brutal.

"Why not put shackles on me and be done with it?" Carlotta had asked bitterly, but when Gig had looked at her, she had smiled hastily to show she was only joking.

For she was afraid of Gig, afraid to break her engagement to marry him, afraid because of the bruises on her arms, the knowledge that no one could escape from Gig, least of all a girl he loved. And he was madly in love with Carlotta. He worshiped Carlotta and meant to marry her.

She had thought she loved him two months ago, but now she was only afraid. She had only one hope of getting away from him, a hope growing dimmer by the day as he kept insisting that their marriage must be soon. When he had left last week on a flying trip into the interior of Cuba, he had said: "We will be married when I come back."

And he would be back tomorrow or next day. Or maybe tonight.

Even though Gig had given her this job and liked to have men stare at her in admiration, he was always furious if she flirted with anyone. The native men knew better, for they knew that she was engaged to Gig. But these Americans were different. She had to be careful. Even with Gig away, she dared not let this man flirt with her. The head waiter, Tobie, would give a full report when Gig came home. And Gig would be furious.

AND so all evening she had been avoiding the table where the big, handsome American was sitting alone. She had avoided him because she saw that from the moment she entered the room, he had stared at her. Even during the floor show, with dozens of beautiful girls in the chorus, he had kept looking at Carlotta.

She had circled the floor, hoping he would leave, carefully passing a table or so away from him, but now at last she had to face him.

And so she stood there, holding the bottle of perfume out to him, while he stared at her. And her black eyes stared back at him, defiantly, coldly, a little frightened. He was so much better looking than she had known, so clean-cut and broad shouldered, so frank and brown and honest looking. He was grinning at her as if there were no reason she couldn't grin back at him. With such a man, a girl could forget fear. With such a man a girl could wake up in the middle of the night without going cold with terror at the slightest sound, without dreaming of knives and blood and unspeakable horror. Married to a man like this—

Then she realized what she was thinking, and the fear grew stronger in her eyes, as if even far away Gig might know what she was thinking.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

She said quickly, her voice strained now and higher, "This perfume for your wife—"

"I have no wife," he said.

He looked into her eyes as he said that. And the way he said it brought the blood to her childishly lovely face, and her eyes faltered and fell. He seemed to be adding, *I have no wife but would you care to do anything about it?*

The sentence hung in the air, like a bright and fragile balloon. It could be caught and held, or it could be allowed to float away. And for a breathless moment, it was as if each of them watched the balloon, daring the other to catch it and make something of it.

Carlotta brushed it aside abruptly, by saying:

"Cigars or cigarettes, *Senor,* perhaps?" She prepared to leave and turn away to another table.

"Cigarettes," he said quickly, as if to hold her, then added, "and if you will give me one of those nice flaming smiles of yours, I shan't need a match."

"My smiles are not for sale, *Senor,*" she said.

She handed him the cigarettes as she spoke, and he caught her hand. The touch of his hand was warm and tingling on hers, making her suddenly weak, sending numbness up her arm. It was as if his hand had the same electric quality of his eyes.

"I didn't ask to buy a smile," he said, very low. "I asked you to give me one."

She hastily drew her hand away.

"Kindly pay for the cigarettes, *Senor,*" she said, sharpness in her voice. And no smile. Not even the red grimace that passed for a smile these days, for when was the last time she had really smiled? Not even the red grimace because she was afraid that Tobie might be watching.

And if she should smile at an American and if Gig were told— She could almost see the white-hot anger in his eyes, feel the bruising twist of his fingers on her arms.

"Sit down and have a drink with me," the American said. "Have some supper, too."

"I have my job, *Senor.* Please excuse me."

He hadn't given her the money for the cigarettes, but she was willing to forget that now. She was about to turn away, but he caught her tray and with a quick movement, lifted it from her shoulder and placed it on an empty chair beside him. Then he motioned to the other vacant chair.

"Oh, sit down," he said. "I'll buy the whole works. I'll buy all the stuff you have here and give you a hundred peso tip besides, how's that? Now what do you want for supper?"

"Senor!" Her face had gone white with fright. She caught up the tray as if it were a life preserver that could save her from drowning in this sea of fear.

AND then Tobie was there beside her. Tobie who was dark and pock-marked, yet arrogant and condescending, as became a head-waiter. Tobie who could throw a knife with deadly accuracy. He helped her readjust the tray, fitting the shoulder sling about her neck.

"Is something wrong, *Senor?*" Tobie asked, addressing himself to the American, ignoring Carlotta except for a black glance.

The American drew his hand from his pocket and handed a hundred peso note to Tobie. "I wish to have supper with this girl," he said. "I am Peter Stanley from New York. I'll buy all the rubbish on this tray and pay double the price. I wish to have supper with her, is that okay?"

Tobie fingered the hundred peso note lovingly. He hesitated only a moment, then he signaled for a waiter.

"Have another girl come to sell cigarettes," Tobie said to the waiter. "Car-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

lotta is having supper with a friend."

Then he drew out a chair for Carlotta, as Pete Stanley rose and bowed to her, saying, "Carlotta, what a lovely name!"

Carlotta said, under her breath, "But Gig—"

"He isn't here," Tobie said in a half-whisper. "I'll make it all right."

Tobie would make it all right, indeed! Carlotta knew that if Gig found out and got mad, Tobie would shift the blame neatly to Carlotta. But what could she do? Tobie couldn't resist the tip and another girl was hurrying from the dressing room, to take up the tray. Peter Stanley helped her into the chair at his table.

"There!" he said. "Hello, Carlotta!"

She looked at him, still without smiling, without answering.

"Say, 'Hello Pete!' " he commanded with a grin.

"I don't admire your tactics!" she said then. Her broken English and Spanish accent had changed to straight American English. He blinked.

"Oh, so you are an American!" he cried. "That accent was phony."

"I was born on Long Island," she said briefly.

"Then it should be easy for you to say, 'Hello, Pete!' "

Carlotta didn't answer, but in spite of herself, she felt her spirits lifting.

Sitting at this table with a charming man, it was as if she were seeing the night-club for the first time. Seeing it through the eyes of an American tourist bent on a good time. It was a gay, glamorous place, with its black and scarlet walls and tables, its terra cotta tile, its semi-patio style. There were great vivid blue parakeets painted on screens and a tinkling fountain in the center of the dance floor. Giant tubs of ferns and dwarf palms and clumps of bananas studded the place.

It was dim and cool and exotic. *El Chico,* one of the most glamorous night spots in Cuba. A noiseless waiter appeared in a moment with Pete's order, piles of fresh mangoes and grapes on a painted platter, chicken salad on watercress, white wine, chilled to perfection.

"Just for this one hour," Pete said leaning toward her across the table, "can't you forget whatever it is that keeps you so aloof, so white and silent? Can't you, just once, say, 'Hello, Pete?' "

She looked at him quickly. So he had noticed! It was so clear on her face, her unhappiness, her fear. And he was right. She might as well forget it for one hour. She smiled suddenly, a weary smile, a little ashamed, as a child might look ashamed after pouting.

"For a little hour, then," she said, "hello, Pete."

His grin faded. He was still watching her face.

"You are very beautiful when you smile," he said. "And I see now that you are even younger than I had thought. Eighteen?"

"Nineteen," she said.

"Oh, nearly ancient, then," he said, laughing. "So it's old age that is making you unhappy. I wondered. And what have you been doing for these many years, since you were born on Long Island?"

Since you were born on Long Island. How much had happened! How far had she come from that little Long Island town, from the remembered beach and the summer crowd and her mother who had died there.

IT had been ten years since she and her father had left Long Island. Carlotta had been nine then, but she remembered it well. She could even remember her mother a little, her sickness, her death. She could remember her father sobbing, remember his arms about her and his voice:

"We'll go to Cuba, Carlotta, to your grandmother's plantation. You'll be happy there."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

So her father had closed his law office in the little Long Island town and they took a boat and sailed for Havana. Carlotta's grandmother was half Spanish, and had been born and brought up on the Cuban sugar and tobacco plantation which she still lived on. Carlotta's father had gone to New York, married and settled there. But now with his wife gone, he had wanted to go back to Cuba.

To *Las Palmas,* a great, spreading plantation of sugar and tobacco, of a broad river and many trees and birds, wild winding lanes, tropical color, beauty, life.

Her grandmother had lived there, with dozens of servants and field workers and a Spanish housekeeper, dark and fat old Juana. Her grandmother had been delighted to have them come to live there.

How beautiful *Las Palmas* had been in those days, with the old plantation house newly painted, so white that the high palms, the old drooping willows, the magnificent clumps of bananas and flowering bird-of-paradise and hibiscus, mango trees and coral trees, showed vividly against it.

Carlotta had had a governess who gave her lessons in the big nursery, and piano lessons on the grand piano in the magnificent old drawing room. There had been afternoons of romping with her collie, going with her father about the plantation, watching the harvesting of sugar cane, swimming in the wide old river back of the house.

What heaven those days at *Las Palmas.* And then her grandmother had died, leaving *Las Palmas* to her father and herself. It was at her grandmother's funeral that she first met Gig Van Ness. He was a distant cousin, the only relative she and her father had.

Carlotta was sent away to a convent, then, and was in *Las Palmas* only on vacations. It seemed lonely and strange with her grandmother and her governess gone.

Need Thin Gillettes? Don't over-buy—
Be thoughtful of the other guy!
These thrifty blades, priced four for ten,
Last long—rate high with well-groomed men!
Outlast Ordinary Blades Two To One
THIN Gillette BLADES
4 for 10¢
Produced By The Maker Of The Famous Gillette Blue Blade

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Juana, the old housekeeper, was still there but Juana was given to strange talk of witchcraft and zombies.

And so the years had passed until she finished school and came home to be mistress at *Las Palmas*. It was lonely, still, because her convent had been in Miami and she had no friends in Cuba. Lonely and sad, for her father had died.

Las Palmas belonged to her, then. The workers in the fields, the hot sun on the river, the drowsy beauty of the lanes and gardens, Juana singing her chanting songs in the kitchen. Out of all the world *Las Palmas* seemed to be the one sure, unchanging spot.

And then Gig began visiting occasionally, and she asked his advice, was flattered that he was interested. For things were changing. The new sugar crop had been mortgaged, and the harvest was poor, and there was no money in the bank. And many of the workers were leaving suddenly. Several servants quit without notice.

Juana told her why. "It's zombies," Juana said, rolling her dark eyes.

ZOMBIES! The walking dead. Dead bodies, who left the grave and wandered about with staring, sightless eyes, moved by some strange and wicked power. Zombies coming back to do the bidding of this power, ragged in their grave clothes, mute, horrible. Zombies! Devils walking in dead bodies.

"Zombies are taking over this place, now your father is gone," Juana said. "I know the signs. Flowers dying. Birds leaving. Food missing from the kitchen. Cold chill in the air down by the river. Crops no good. And I've seen the face of a zombie at my window. Down in the work shacks the men heard footsteps and two men have died in fits."

"Oh, stop it, Juana!" Carlotta had said impatiently. Her father never had let her listen to Juana's witchcraft stories but now that Carlotta was alone, Juana talked more and it was harder not to listen.

"I'm using all my magic," Juana insisted. "Boiling up a rattlesnake hide with the roots from a black gum tree. I've got a red string tied above my door, chanting magic all the time—"

"Oh, do stop it!" Carlotta cried and she laughed. Not a happy laugh, but a laugh. And very soon she was unable to laugh, at all.

For suddenly, like a rolling avalanche that gained strength and speed, the very air of *Las Palmas* was filled with fear. In the weeks that followed, the servants went about whispering, shaken with terror, and even the most faithful were leaving. And one week-end the field workers had left in a body. Another one had died of fits. A third had had a dream. A fourth had seen a face.

Carlotta telegraphed to Gig Van Ness in Havana. He had come and hired new men for the field, laughed at her fears, left the place after warning her, seriously and anxiously, to be careful.

"You don't believe in zombies, surely?" Carlotta had cried.

Gig was part American, part Spanish. He had been brought up by native nurses, heard tales of zombies all his life. He said now, without smiling:

"It is best not to say you don't believe in something you know nothing about."

And then he had gone, leaving her with chills of terror running up and down her spine. And it was that night that she had seen the face in the window: a dark and horrible face, eyes staring, a dirty rag tied about the head, a hollow, toothless grin—a zombie!

After that she lay awake and heard footsteps and sounds every night. A week later she saw the face again, fleetingly, at the dining room window, as she sat alone at dinner. The next day her collie was dead. Then the workers and servants all

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

quit, leaving only Juana at Las Palmas.

She had known horror and fear during those weeks when only she and the terror stricken old Juana were at *Las Palmas!* They had trembled at every noise in the night, white with terror for fear that face might appear at the windows again.

And then Gig came. How like Sir Galahad he had seemed that first evening when he kissed her and begged her to come into Havana. He wanted her to take a job, get away from it all. He had a job at his night-club. As cigarette girl there she could make her own living.

"Put *Las Palmas* on the market, sell it, get rid of it," Gig had said. "You can go away then, if you like." He had kissed her forehead, gently.

He had come in answer to another telegram. She was only too eager to get away, so grateful for a job. For there was no money now, the last cent had gone for this year's taxes, and no new crops were being planted, no men would come to work. So she had turned *Las Palmas* over to a real estate agent, put Juana on a bus to go stay with a sister nearby, and gone to Havana.

At first *El Chico* had seemed gay and exciting, Gig tender and romantic. Almost at once he told her that he was going to marry her, and she had accepted. He and his life seemed rich and gay and exciting.

And then his temper began to show itself. And she learned things about his gambling houses, his underworld contacts, the men who feared him. She had heard him quarrel, knew things went on that she didn't understand.

And then she began to know and understand that Gig was a sort of king in his own small and sinister world, and that she, as his fiancée, had no chance of escape.

The weeks had passed, the fear and hatred had grown in her heart, and she had waited and waited for *Las Palmas* to sell, for the money that would make it possible for her to flee. And now—

NOW she was sitting at a table with a handsome young American, and she was trembling and white with memories, shaken with the fear of being here. She must get back to her tiny hotel room.

She hadn't touched the wine and food. She had only been sitting there, staring at Pete, remembering in one long moment the things that had happened since she had left America. She stood up, one hand clutched at her aching throat.

"You'll have to excuse me," she said jerkily. "I don't feel well."

Without looking at him or giving him a chance to stop her, she rushed past the tables, through the entertainer's door, back through the halls to the tiny dressing room that was her own.

She slammed the door and locked it. And, trembling violently, she began to change her clothes. She longed to throw herself down and weep but she put the tears aside, waiting until she could be in her room in the hotel down the street.

It was nearly midnight and the night-club would be open for hours, but there was another girl handling her cigarette tray, so she would simply leave. She wanted to get away, be alone, forget for a little while.

She changed into a simple black frock with a ruffle of lace at the throat. Her pale golden hair flying about her, she dashed out of the room, down the hall, into the cool moonlight of the back court that led to a side street.

The court was small, stone paved, bright with silver light and purple shadow. Carlotta stepped from the yellow light of the hallway, into the shadows by the door and a man's arms went about her.

She struggled for a moment, too frightened to scream, numb with fear. Then

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

as the scream rose to her lips, she saw that the man was Peter Stanley.

"So you thought you'd run away from me, gorgeous?" he asked. It was a whispered question against her mouth.

Gig had kissed her and she had disliked his kisses, but no other man had ever kissed her. She hadn't known that a kiss could be like this, thrilling and exciting, but peaceful, too. It was like coming home. Finding where you belonged, at long last. It left her clinging to him, her eyes closed, her lips waiting for more of this strange, sweet drug.

He let her go slowly and laughed a little.

"Maybe you won't run so fast now," he said, for her arms were still about him. She felt a little weak, much less afraid than she had felt in a long, long time.

"I was going home," she said.

"And where is home?" he demanded.

She named the little hotel where she lived, and he said:

"I live at the Plaza hotel. I checked in there today. I'm a stranger in these parts, so it is very rude for you to run away from me. If you don't like *El Chico,* let's go somewhere else for supper, shall we?"

His arm was still about her. She remembered Gig and looked around nervously. If she were seen! But there was no one around. Suddenly she felt excited and almost safe, with his arm so close about her.

If they went to some tiny place, they would be all right. And so they did. Down the narrow old streets, to a little cafe where the pink and silver booths bordered the tiny postage stamp dance floor. And they sat down in the cozy comfort of pink leather, a mirror on the wall reflecting her tangled golden curls, his big bronzed face.

What a relief to be away from *El Chico!* What happiness to feel that for a little she was not being watched, that she could look into this man's face and laugh and talk. For somehow she *could* laugh and talk to him, as if that kiss had in some strange way given her release and courage.

She hardly worried, at all. Only a newsboy or so had seen them.

"I have a lot of things I want to ask you," he said. "Shall we dance?"

AND so they danced, but he didn't talk at once. They circled the crowded little floor, and it was as if they were alone on a pink cloud with all the music of paradise about them.

His lips were against her golden hair, close to her ear.

He whispered, "Lovely, lovely, it would be so easy to love you."

She shivered a little, half in bliss, half in remembered sadness.

"What is love?" she asked.

"It's a double dose of happiness. It's a chocolate soda with two straws. It's two seats on the front row and the curtain going up on a play called *Life.* It could be—us."

"Us?"

"Any two beautiful people. Aren't we two beautiful people?"

He looked at her, his eyes electric. She felt a sudden surging sense of happiness. Happiness such as she could not remember since she and her father used to walk through the hills and along the banks of the river at *Las Palmas.* There they might see a bright colored bird soar out of the green into the blue, a mad blaze of color against the hot blue sky. Or they might come on a mass of wild white flowers, little and heart shaped and perfect. Or if she were swimming in the river and she dived into the cool, strangely clear amber depths, cutting the coldness swiftly, gliding down, down toward the little bright pebbles at the bottom.

Oh, those things had brought happiness, clear and simple and magic happiness that bubbled up in her heart and spilled over into her mind.

And now, Pete's love making was like

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that, too. Simple and magic and bright and gay.

She looked up into the bronze laughter that was his face, into the dazzle of blue that was his eyes. So broad and big, such a man! But a tender man, a man who could stand between a woman and fear.

"Hello, Pete," she said suddenly and she smiled a radiant smile that made her childish face lovely. Her dark eyes widened and he could see the deep violet color in their darkness, a bit of the hidden bright beauty of her soul that lay behind the fear. She shook back her long pale golden hair and clung closer to him.

He understood. This time she had said "Hello, Pete" because she wanted to say it. He held her very tight, strained her to him. And his voice was hoarse.

He whispered, "Thanks."

"Say 'Hello, Carlotta,' " she commanded softly.

"Hello, gorgeous," he said. And they both laughed. "Now we can begin," he added. "Beautiful people have to say hello before they can begin."

"Begin what?"

"Things," he said, but his eyes told her. It was love he meant.

Only they didn't have time to begin because the music stopped and he led her back to the little pink and silver booth. And as they sat down, she looked up and saw Gig coming toward them from the door.

He looked darker and more furious than she had ever seen him, and as he drew near the booth, she saw that he had drawn a knife from his belt. A small, two bladed knife with a carved black handle. And even as she cried out, he threw it.

IT SANG, whining like an insect, as it whizzed past Carlotta, coming between her and Pete, and sank, quivering, into the wall back of the booth. Pete was on his feet instantly, his fists clenched. Carlotta jumped up, too, crying out Gig's name, her voice pleading and shaken.

"I just got in," Gig said angrily, "and there was a newsboy waiting to tell me that you were here with another man! You thought you could sneak out as soon as my back was turned, didn't you?"

He took a step toward her, grabbed her by the arm, twisting it cruelly. But Pete was too quick for him.

"Leave that child alone!" Pete said, his voice low, dangerous, and then he hit Gig on the jaw, knocking him down and out in one hard, vicious blow.

Gig fell, without a sound, sprawling on his back. There was a terrible minute while the waiters and the curious crowd gathered, and Pete just stood there, his face white, his fists knotted. Someone whispered:

"Gig Van Ness!"

That was the amazement of the crowd, that anyone had dared to touch Gig Van Ness. And then before anyone could do a thing, Gig was shaking his head and trying to sit up, dazed.

But Carlotta knew that he would be dazed for only a moment. She grabbed Pete's arm.

"Get out of here, quickly!" she gasped. "Hurry! He'll kill you or have you killed! Get out, please, for my sake!"

"And leave you with this brute?"

"I'm engaged to marry him!" she cried, looking into his startled eyes. "Now do you understand? Now will you go?"

"Is that what you want, Carlotta?" Pete's voice was oddly earnest.

"Yes! yes!"

And so he went, disappearing abruptly into the crowd, just as Gig began to come to.

He saw her and shouted, "Carlotta!" He rose and grabbed her by the arm, twisting it as he always did when he was angry.

He called for someone to get him a taxi, and a few moments later he and Carlotta were heading for her hotel. She

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

didn't speak, she was too frightened. It was the first time she had ever done anything so terrible and she fully expected all the wrath of which he was capable.

Instead he was strangely silent. He gloomily sank back into his corner of the cab, as if he were thinking of something else. She finally could stand the silence no longer. He had ordered the cab to take them first for a drive along the waterfront, and the high royal palms against the silver of the moonlit sea would have been beautiful at another time, or with another man. But now—

"I had to go with him! I mean he insisted—" Carlotta found herself explaining, simply because she had to talk.

To her surprise, his voice was low, almost absentminded.

"I know," he said. "You are just a child. A little flattery turns your head. I should have married you before this. Well, we'll be married next Sunday and then I'll take you to my country place. You'll be okay there."

HIS country place! She felt the hair tingle on her scalp with the hatred and fear in her heart. She knew that place, a desolate, hidden villa where Gig and his friends went sometimes to gamble or to get drunk. He would place her there, and it would be a prison. Then she never would get away.

She longed to scream, "I won't marry you! I won't! I won't!" But she dared not. He would only laugh at her. He knew that she was dependent upon him, that she dared not go back to *Las Palmas*, that she had no money, no training, nothing, not even courage!

She could only sit there, trembling. And she saw him take something from an inside pocket. It was a chain of glittering beads and he dropped them carelessly into her lap.

"A trinket I brought you," he said. "Put it away. I want you to wear it for the first time at your wedding. It isn't expensive but I want you to wear it at your wedding, get me? You'll put it away carefully in your room?"

She hardly looked at it. The glittering beads felt cold in her hand as she dropped it into her bag.

"I'll put it away carefully," she said, tonelessly. She didn't bother to say thank you. Why should she say thank you? She didn't want the cold beads. She didn't want to marry him.

The taxi driver had stopped before her hotel, now. Gig put his arms about Carlotta.

"I'll say good night," he said. "I'll see you for lunch tomorrow. I am all in from my trip."

And then he kissed her, a hot, frightening kiss. Hard, violent, so like Gig, himself. As he helped her from the cab, he twisted her arm again for good measure.

"And no more flirting," he said warningly as he climbed back into the car, leaving her to turn, wordlessly, and run up the steps, into the lobby of her small hotel.

Her arm ached from his grasp. Her lips were still bruised with the unpleasant heaviness of his mouth. *Marry him Sunday.*

For days, for weeks, she had known that she didn't want to marry Gig, that she longed only to escape from him. But not until tonight did she dream of the real love she would be missing. Now she knew what a kiss should be like. For, with Gig's kiss still on her mouth, she was thinking of Pete's kiss.

She reached her room and found mail on her desk. There was only one letter, from her real estate agent. It was his letters she waited for these days, waiting for the one that would tell of the sale of *Las Palmas*.

That money would buy her a seat on a plane to take her to Miami and freedom. With enough money, she could run away

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

from Gig. Escape before he married her.

She opened the letter feverishly and read it under the yellow bulb of light overhead in the shabby little room.

". . . . I'm afraid it is altogether hopeless. I can't sell a place of that size when no native worker will go near it. It is overrun with weeds and needs paint, but I can't get anyone to do a day's work there. You know yourself that it takes at least a dozen servants and field workers to keep the place going. No one will buy it so long as no laborer will go there. When a place gets the reputation of being haunted by zombies, you might as well burn it down and forget it. I'm very sorry. I'd be only too glad to sell if I could, but frankly, I would not live there myself if you gave me the place, so I can hardly convince a buyer to take it. Strange things have been seen around there. Juana was telling me of finding a trail of blood in the kitchen and back garden. . ."

THE letter slipped from her nerveless fingers. A trail of blood into the kitchen was a sign that zombies had been in for food during the night. Their blood was not warm but cold, like a fish or a snake, so Juana said. And the real estate agent, a sensible enough man, was also afraid of the zombies.

He didn't believe in them, of course, he had said, and still. . . . Anyway, there went her last hope. The one to which she had clung so desperately. The hope of getting money and escaping. And now that hope was gone.

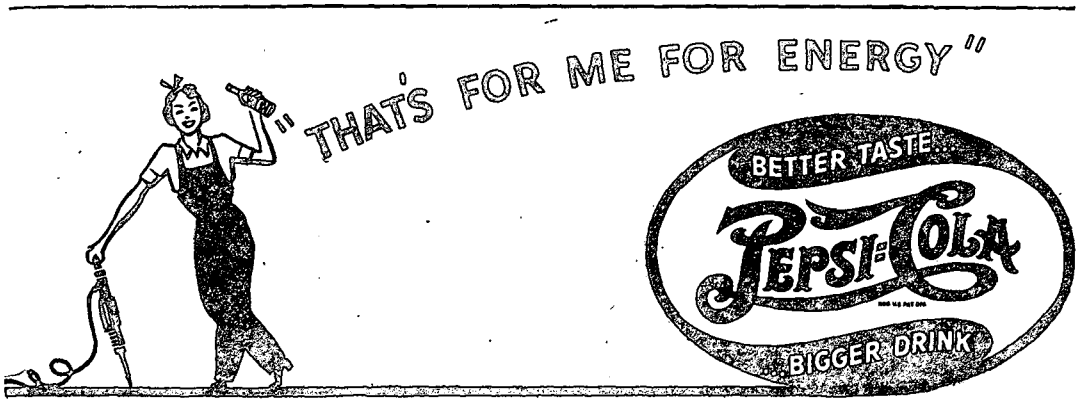
If she ran away penniless, the police would pick her up sooner or later. And Gig, with his influence would have her put in his custody. She was still a minor and Gig was her only relative. He had threatened to have her put under his care, if she disobeyed him. But, of course, marriage was even better, from his point of view. And he meant to marry her Sunday.

The only place in the world she could call her own was *Las Palmas*. And even if she could find the courage to go back and live there, she would soon go bankrupt without workers or servants or crops.

No one else could help her except—except, of course, Pete Stanley!

At the thought of him she suddenly jumped to her feet, her heart pounding. She knew that he was at the Plaza Hotel. He was here on business or something and might be leaving tomorrow. But he had said he loved her. If she could marry him and go back to New York with him . . . .

The solution was so simple that for a breathless moment she wondered why she hadn't thought of it before. She turned and stared at herself in the mirror. The simple black frock with its lace collar,



PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the mass of golden curls, the slender curves, the lovely face— Yes, she would go to Pete! Now, at once!

She brushed her hair, touched her lips with scarlet, and ran out of her room, stopping only to grab up her bag. It was heavy from the beads that Gig had given her, and she stopped in the corridor and turned to her room. There she took the beads from her bag and looked at them curiously.

She caught her breath at the beauty of them. It was a diamond necklace. Imitation diamonds, of course, but they looked real enough. Each was large and perfect and the pendant was a great pear shaped diamond, half as big as an egg. Gaudy, cheap paste! And they would look ridiculous on her slender, childish throat. But they were like Gig, with his sleek hair, his incredibly loud ties.

Carlotta dropped the necklace with a grimace of distaste, then she closed her bag and went out again, running this time. She went down the stairs rather than take the elevator, out the servants' entrance so that no one would see her leave the hotel. Some of Gig's men might be around the front.

She found a cab on the dim side street and ordered the driver to take her to the Plaza. And so it was nearly two o'clock in the morning when she stood at the desk in the big onyx and marble lobby of the Plaza and asked for Peter Stanley.

The clerk called his room and was told to send her on up. And so she crossed over to the elevator, a little gilt and plush affair, and found her heart beating now, heavily, excitedly. For the first time since the idea came to her, she was wondering if she should have come.

But before she had time to wonder, the elevator stopped, she got out, walked down the corridor, and found Pete's door open and Pete standing there in his shirt sleeves. With his tie off, his sleeves pushed up, he looked younger. His sandy head was ruffled, his blue eyes were on her questioningly.

"Well!" he said. "Do come in!"

HE LET her in to his suite, a large living room furnished with heavy Spanish mahogany and red drapes, its open French windows looking down on the cool moonlit courtyard.

She came in and the door swung shut behind her. He led her over to the couch and bowed formally and with a sweep of his hand motioned to her to sit down.

He sat down beside her and took her hand suddenly, seeming to realize that she was white with fear and terror.

"Tell me," he said gently.

She said it quickly, before she could be afraid.

"I came to tell you that I would marry you and go back to the United States with you," she said rapidly.

He looked stunned.

"Of course, we'll have to go at once," Carlotta hurried on. "On tomorrow's plane. We can be married tonight. You can get special papers, if you go to the right people and then we can get the plane about sunrise. I've checked on them because I was hoping that I could go alone, but now—"

It had seemed so simple, back there in her room. So right. She had been so sure of her love for him, his kiss, his smile, all of his ways. And she had remembered that he had said he loved her, too. Or very nearly the same thing, hadn't he? *What had he said?* She wasn't sure, now, and as she stared at him, suddenly ashamed and afraid, he began to laugh.

"Marry you tonight?" he asked. "Is this a gag, or something?"

Her face was crimson. She stared at him, understanding his viewpoint. He had just met her a few hours ago, had had the very unpleasant experience with

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Gig, and now she was asking him to marry her at three o'clock in the morning! His love making that had seemed so tender, so real, had been just a line. Something he had already forgotten.

But Carlotta had been young enough and simple enough to think he meant it. And her need for his help had been greater than her reason or her logic, it seemed now.

She stood up quickly, tears stinging her eyes. He stood up, too; as if he didn't know whether to laugh or not. He started to laugh, stopped, then awkwardly offered her a cigarette from the china box on the table.

She ignored the cigarette. She was angry now, more angry at herself than at him. She was the one who laughed, harshly, brokenly.

"One kiss, one dance, and I want you to marry me!" she said huskily. "Yes, I always ask men to marry me. I do it for a gag. I'm sorry you don't find it amusing!"

She rushed from the room, then, down the corridor, to the elevator. He came after her, dashed into the elevator just behind her.

"See here—" he began and stopped. There were two or three people in the elevator who were staring curiously at them.

He was silent until they reached the lobby, then he caught her arm and led her out the terrace entrance into the moonlit courtyard.

The moon was sinking, big and red in the west, and the tall palms and glistening foliage of the tropical plants looked silver in the blue-white light. There was the scent of lemons in the air and the rustle of sleeping mockingbirds in the trees.

Pete turned her to him and looked down into her face. There were tears, glittering in the light, on her cheeks.

"Why you are crying!"

They were close together and the spell of the last kiss came over them again. And so he was kissing her for the second time that night.

But this time his kiss was more demanding, more passionate, blazing through her like a high singing note of a song, breaking like a thousand rockets on her heart. Again she clung to him and grew weak, but this time it was Carlotta who broke away, pushing him from her. Sobbing as she turned and ran.

"Wait!" he called. "I want to talk to you!"

BUT she was gone, out the courtyard, into the narrow side street, and just then two of Gig's men stepped from a parked car and grabbed her arms.

"Here you are!" one cried. "Gig told us to watch you and you gave us the slip! Now, get back to your room before we tell Gig—"

She gave a high frightened cry, almost a scream, of terror, as one of the men picked her up and dumped her into the back of the car. She heard Pete running toward the street just as the car started.

"What do you mean Gig sent you to watch me?" she demanded from the swarthy man at her side. But it was the driver of the car who answered.

"Just that," he said. "He sent us over to watch and see that you stayed in your hotel. You gave us the slip when you came out the servants' entrance. We just happened to see you turning the corner in the taxi. We followed and waited and now—"

"Now," the swarthy fellow said, "you get back to your room and go sleepy-by or we'll tell Gig. And Papa spank, you know."

Both of the men laughed. Carlotta sank down limply into the car. What was the use? She might as well get used to it. This was the way that Gig would have her watched every moment.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

She tried to keep some dignity, some aloofness, but it was hard with these men treating her like a naughty child. They stopped their car before her hotel and walked with her up to the lobby. She turned her back on them and, without saying good-by, quickly walked inside to the elevator.

In her room she sank down on the edge of the bed, too desolate to cry. What a fool she had been! What a silly fool! To go running to a strange man and offer to marry him, just because he had kissed her once, just because of the sweet nothings whispered during one dance!

How could she have thought that he would want to marry her? What did he know about her? What, for that matter, did she know about him? Nothing, except that his eyes were gay and blue, and his kiss was heaven.

She was still sitting there, smoking a cigarette, when there was a tap at her door. She stood up, frightened as the tap grew louder. Would Gig dare to come here? Drunk? Angry?

A louder knock came, but she dared not speak. Then she heard a voice. Pete's voice!

Weak with relief, she opened the door, let him in. She shut the door again and leaned against it, sobbing, half laughter, half tears.

"You're hysterical," Pete said. He took her by the arms and sat down beside her on the vanity bench. "I came over because I knew something was wrong. I had to know if you were safe and if I could help."

"It was only my private guards," she said, trying to laugh. "I'm quite safe. I don't think there is anything you could do to help. You'd better go."

"Not until you tell me what this is all about," he said tensely. "Out with it, all of it. Why are you engaged to this Gig, if you hate him so? Why do you work for him? And what in the world has you scared? I've never seen so much abject terror in any face. Tell me!"

And so she told him, bit by bit, as the gray light of dawn grew pink in the windows. She told of *Las Palmas* and the zombies, of Gig and his temper, of her fear of him, her inability to escape.

"Poor kid," he said when she had finished. "So that was why you wanted to marry me and get away from here by the first plane! I was a brute to laugh at you. But now you can count on me to help."

"But what can you do to help?" she cried.

"Tell me more about *Las Palmas*," he said. "This zombie story sounds pretty weird to me. Is there anything of value there? I think I'd like to go out to *Las Palmas*. Someone obviously wants to keep everyone away from the place. It might solve a lot of things to find out why. Would you take me there?"

"Yes, of course. When?"

"Now. By the next bus. We haven't any time to lose. Van Ness's men probably saw me come in here and he may have them gunning for me, even now."

At least it was action! It was getting away, doing something. She caught up her coat and tied a scarf about her head, touched her lips with lipstick, powdered her nose. She was ready.

DURING the two hour bus ride to the little town near *Las Palmas*, they were silent. Pete told her to sleep if she could, and she did doze a little now and then. Once they stopped for coffee and a sandwich. And when they reached the village, they had to wait for a second cross country bus that would take them within a two mile walk of *Las Palmas*. A walk through the tobacco and sugar cane fields, toward the main plantation house.

As they waited for the second bus, Carlotta couldn't keep from thinking of the many times that the station wagon from *Las Palmas* had met her in this village.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But now, of course, there was no one in the village who would drive them to *Las Palmas,* and there was no car available. So they waited and boarded the second bus. Then they rode the ten miles on the main highway and got off at a country cross road that led to the big gates that held the faded gilt words: *Las Palmas.*

They walked, silently, through the gates, up the winding lanes. It was a two mile walk to the big house, past the workers' huts, now vacant, past the weed filled fields that had not been planted this season. Desolation fell like a pall over the place even before they came in sight of the house with its overgrown garden and scaling paint.

And yet the beauty of *Las Palmas* in the early morning! She had almost forgotten the long winding lanes, bordered by giant sunflowers, wet with dew. And the great trees pointing the way to the wide river back of the workers' huts. The lush, damp fragrance.

Tears were in her eyes, remembering how she had loved it all. They stopped to rest a moment as they came in sight of the house, for it was up hill and growing warm. Pete took a handkerchief from his pocket to mop his brow and then abruptly thrust the handkerchief back into his pocket—but not soon enough!

For in drawing out the handkerchief, he had accidentally drawn out a glittering necklace. Carlotta's necklace, the gaudy diamond, that looked so real! She had left it on her vanity dresser, and while he was in the room, Pete had slipped it into his pocket!

Pete a thief! She remembered what he had said about the art treasures! So that was why he wanted to come to *Las Palmas,* to see if there was anything worth stealing! She remembered his beautiful suite of rooms. She realized suddenly that, at his age, he should be in the Army back home in New York. He was an adventurer, of course. A thief, perhaps wanted by the law. No doubt he had come to Havana to escape the law back in the United States!

All these thoughts went through her weary, feverish mind in a flash, even as she pretended not to have noticed the stolen necklace. They walked on slowly in silence for a moment, but now she was afraid of Pete, afraid to be alone with him in this desolate, terror filled plantation. Her one thought was to get back to the main highway where there were passing cars and people.

She stopped suddenly. "I'm afraid I can't go on," she said, her voice strained. "This place gives me the creeps. If you want to go on alone, go ahead. I'm going back to the highway to wait for you."

She dared not meet his eye. But he said easily:

"Fine. I think that will be much better. There is no use opening old wounds by going up to the house. Go back to the highway and wait at the bus stop for me. Better still, go back to the village and wait in the cafe at the bus station. I'll be along as soon as I give the place the once over."

So, with only a mumbled farewell, she turned back and started down the long lane toward the main road. In a moment a turn and a second turn were between her and Pete and they lost sight of each other.

She walked along rapidly, not caring now for the beauty of the place, thinking only of the disillusion she had just had. Pete a thief!

A movement in the giant sunflowers beside the lane made her turn her head and suddenly she saw, between the great stalks of the flowers, a face.

It was a dark and horrible face, the eyes staring, the hollow, toothless grin. It was *the face* that had looked in her window. The zombie's face!

She stared for a long moment, while she seemed to go white hot, ice cold, then

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

it was as if she had lost control, all feeling, and was sinking down, down, in darkness, soft as black velvet.

SHE came to slowly, conscious of a dull aching head, at first too dazed to open her eyes, to remember. Then she heard a voice, a cackling laugh, an old man's voice.

"She fainted dead away," the voice said. "She thought I was a zombie. I told Van Ness I more than earn my salary around here. They might hire plenty to pretend to be zombies but where will they find anyone who looks the part, as I do?"

Another man's voice said impatiently, "So that is Van Ness's girl! Why doesn't he keep her in Havana? I don't like having women messed up in this, anyway. We've been doing well enough. I got a letter from the German high command congratulating us. It was in code, of course. I had written, telling of the good Nazi organization we were building up in Cuba, of the wonderful layout we had here, with a plantation completely deserted because we had hired a zombie to haunt it!" He stopped and laughed.

Carlotta opened her eyes then, her heart pounding. She realized that she was in the bleak, dirty back room of one of the worker's huts near the river. The two men were talking in the front room of the shack. And already she had heard enough to know that the man she had thought was a zombie was merely a toothless old man who had been hired to frighten her and her servants off *Las Palmas*. She half sat up, then sank back down, and listened as the men talked on.

"Van Ness could have used his villa for our band to meet but his place is too well known. The police go there and raid it because of gambling and besides he doesn't trust his own men who are there. This place is perfect because everyone is afraid to come here."

The old man's cackling laughter sounded again. "Well, we haven't done much yet," he said, "but now that I have the short wave radio working and can get messages through to Berlin, we will begin to be useful. Van Ness went to Miami to pick up the diamonds they need from the jewel thief who brought them down from New York. The diamond necklace is supposed to be worth over a quarter of a million and it will be worth more than that to the German munition makers."

"Yes," the other man said, "they must have diamonds in the machines and they need them desperately. The radio message from Van Ness last night said that he had the necklace but that he'd have to hide for a few days."

The necklace that Gig had given her last night! So it was real and his trip had been to Miami to pick it up! He had given it to her because he thought it would be safer hidden in her room than in his own safe.

And now Pete Stanley had that necklace! But they were talking again, this time about Pete!

"The man with Van Ness's girl, you say he is a United States investigator?"

The old man said, "Yes, they radioed me by short wave from Havana early this morning. The man named Peter Stanley has been checked and they found that he is a federal investigator from America. He may have followed Van Ness to Havana or he may just have stumbled on the girl by chance. In any case, he is up at the plantation house nosing around now and he'll never leave there alive! I've just sent a message to the village. We'll fix Peter Stanley before he gets much investigating done!"

Pete! Pete had taken the necklace because he recognized it! He had come here to *Las Palmas* as a federal investigator for the United States! And he was going to be killed by Gig's men! Even now they might be up at the house, may have already killed him!

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"And the girl?"

"Oh, we'll keep her here until Gig sends for her," the old man said easily. "I'll give her some coffee when she wakes from her faint. Quite a shock, seeing a zombie, you know!" And he cackled again.

Carlotta sat up, shaking her head to blink away the last bit of dizziness. Pete! Pete! Her one thought was to get to Pete and warn him in time! She looked about the room, saw a back door that was half ajar. If she could get out without being heard, slip through the fields along the river, she could be at the plantation house in five or ten minutes.

She had to do it!

SHE rose to her feet, started toward the door, stumbled and knocked down a chair. She heard the men in the front room start up, and she began running, out the back door, toward the protection of the trees near the river.

"Stop!" she heard the younger man cry. "Stop, I say! We will shoot!"

The bullet cut cruelly into her shoulder just as she reached the river bank. She looked back and saw the men running toward her. They would reach her. She had only one chance and she took it, diving into the depths of the river she had known as a child.

She dove deep, swimming underwater until she was around the bend, then came up for air only a second, diving deep again. She had learned to swim that way. They would think she had drowned. And in a few moments of hard swimming, she could pull up in the underbrush and make her way through the overgrown garden to the house.

She was wet to the skin, her yellow hair soaked about her shoulders, one arm limp, as she drew herself through the garden to the familiar entrance of the kitchen.

"Pete! Pete!"

She heard his steps through the big rooms, and he was beside her, catching her before she fell. She clung to him, sobbing hysterically, telling him the whole story as quickly as she could.

"They are coming to kill you," she finished. "I came to tell you. They shot at me but I swam under water. I had to get here to tell you."

He held her close. "Ss-sh!" he said. "Look!"

He pointed out the window. It was the police car with half a dozen officers arriving from the village.

"I thought something was going on here. I suspected what it was, so I telephoned ahead before we left Havana and told the village police to be out here soon after we arrived. And there they are. They've been scouting about, may already have picked up the two men in the hut. In any case they will get them and all the others. I have found papers upstairs that will arrest a dozen of the top saboteurs here in Cuba, the men who are trying to organize a Nazi Fifth Column."

"Then you came to Cuba just to arrest these men?"

"To help the Cuban authorities," he corrected her. "You see Cuba is honeycombed with Nazi spies. I knew that Gig Van Ness picked up that necklace in Miami. I let him bring it on over, believing it would lead me on to find the Nazi gang behind him who wanted those diamonds. And I was right. I came to *El Chico* last night, beating Van Ness there because an Army bomber brought me over and made better time than his plane. I wanted to talk to you because I'd learned that you were his girl and to tell you the truth I thought you were in on it all. Then—"

"When I came to your room?"

"I thought it might be that Van Ness had sent you there to find out who I was. I didn't trust you. But when I followed you to your room and saw the necklace, I realized you must not know its value.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

For safe keeping, I pocketed it. Then I called the police to meet me at *Las Palmas,* because from what you told me, I felt sure that this was the place they had made their headquarters. And I've found papers to prove it. They'll all be arrested, including Gig Van Ness. Frankly, I still wasn't sure you were completely innocent until—"

"Until?"

"My poor darling, until you were shot and risked your life to come and tell me this. Here, let me dress that wounded shoulder."

"It doesn't hurt. Nothing hurts now!"

She lifted radiant, tear filled eyes to his face, and he caught her gently, tenderly in his arms.

"My darling," he said. "My little darling. Last night you asked me to marry you because you were desperately afraid and you thought I could take you away to freedom. Was that the only reason, Carlotta? Now that you are no longer afraid, do you think that you could still mean it? I'm not very wonderful, darling. I *do* have a lot of money. I couldn't join the Army because of a bum knee left over from football in college, so I offered to do anything I could to help out in the war effort. They put me on as a special investigator because I knew languages and knew my way around. Sometimes it is pretty dangerous work. We couldn't live here at *Las Palmas.* You'd have to go back to the States with me but—"

"Are you asking me to marry you?" she cried, her eyes shining.

"In my blundering way, yes," he said. "Will you marry me?"

For answer she lifted her lips, closed her eyes, and waited for that wonderful, peaceful moment when he would kiss her, a kiss that would blot out all pain and all fear forever.

Share a Heart

By Velda Johnston

Can a girl share her heart between two men? Can infatuation for one man blind a girl to her real love for another? That was Dana's problem.

As a companion and sweetheart, Richard was so wonderful that Dana refused to listen to Jeff's warning that she never could find happiness with a man like Richard. She thought it was Jeff's jealousy that made him dislike Richard so, for Jeff loved her, too. She would not listen to the village gossip about Richard and went on blindly trusting him.

How Richard could have any connection with the ghost that haunted her garden, Dana couldn't imagine, and refused to believe that he did. She even accused Jeff of being responsible for the ghost. But when desperate danger threatened Dana, Jeff was no longer there to protect her. Was her faith in the wrong man to cost her life?

If you like exciting love stories spiced with mystery, don't miss SHARE A HEART in the October issue, on sale now.

Love Book Magazine

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

RINGS ON HER FINGERS

By HOPE CAMPBELL

Hunt didn't want to marry a glamour girl who thought that a wedding ring was just one more trinket for her collection.

Hunt looked at the dramatic sheaf of lilies laid across her arm. "What are you advertising?" he asked, smiling.

JINGLES BLUE leaned back in the taxi, lit a cigarette and automatically discarded the blue match box, with its all-over pattern of gold jingle bells. The next fare would pick it up and think of her. She very seldom missed a trick even when her mind was as occupied as it was now.

Hunt Robertson was in New York on furlough, and Jingles' heart had been singing all morning, her pulses racing

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

with the knowledge. But even so she was more than a little perturbed about it all. Because Jingles was not at all sure Hunt was going to be reasonable about her career. And she simply would not marry Hunt on his terms.

One thing was to the good at least, Jingles thought, as she stepped out of the taxi and prepared to make an entrance. This was a lunch date and it was much easier to be firm with Hunt in the cold light of day. As long as Hunt did not touch or kiss her. When he did, she was all too apt to forget how important being one of New York's topmost models and potential movie material was.

She swept into Forty-Three like a star stepping out on the stage. Her smooth shining gold hair, and the gold was as real as the misty bright cornflower blue of her eyes, just touched the shoulders of her suavely simple black dress. That dress, and the huge blue earrings and matching costume ring she wore, had set her back an almost disastrous amount, but one look at the faces around her assured Jingles they had been well worth it. She was a sensation, and Jingles loved being sensational.

Then she saw Hunt, and she forgot about herself.

"Hunt," Jingles breathed and held out both her hands.

He took them, still grinning. "Nicely posed," Hunt congratulated.

She stiffened. Hunt did not realize that it was part of a model's job to keep up appearances in public. But her resentment disappeared instantly in the sheer thrilling happiness of being with him.

"You really got your seventy-two hours?"

"Really did."

"Then we must do a lot of things and go to a lot of places," Jingles planned eagerly.

"All of them the proper places, where we'll be seen to the best advantage by the most people," Hunt gibed laughingly.

Jingles' eyes darkened rebelliously. Then she automatically smoothed out her face and looked up at Hunt, smiling. She got it done just in time, as the flash bulb went off. These publicity pictures they took in Forty-Three didn't always make the papers but when they did it was wonderful.

"Just a pan in the flash, aren't you, dear?" Hunt drawled.

"Now, Hunt," she snapped, "I've saved all my time for you while you're in town. I turned down a very important job. But I didn't do it to sit around and listen to a lot of mean cracks."

"I didn't plan to spend our time that way either," Hunt said quietly. "My idea was to go right down to City Hall from here and then take you back to camp with me. After I'm shipped abroad you can go to my family."

IT was the old argument, the reason Jingles had not married Hunt months ago. Her career. Her lovely exciting career. Jingles simply would not give it up and live with Hunt's wealthy conservative family. And Hunt would not marry her and let her go on working. Jingles could not understand it. She was famous. Jingles thought it was wonderful, but Hunt shrugged it off as something cheap and rather stupid, particularly her open pleasure in it all.

"I'll marry you if you'll let me go on working," Jingles said stubbornly. "Hunt, I might even get a crack at the movies."

Hunt raised one black eyebrow mockingly. "Much as I hate to refuse a lady—no. Perhaps it was just one of my bad ideas anyhow. I do have them, now and then."

Panic touched Jingles' heart. She had been so sure that in time Hunt would marry her on her own terms. But suddenly he sounded frighteningly final.

"Maybe," she stammered, trying to

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

think of any compromise that would placate Hunt and still give her what she wanted, "I might—"

Hunt shook his head and caught her slender white fingers in the palm of his bronzed hand. "Rings on your fingers and bells on your toes. That's what you want, Jingles, not a wedding ring. Life's just a fun-ride for you, and I wouldn't take you off your lovely merry-go-round. It means too much to you. So what are we eating? Is it true what they say about steaks in New York?"

She hardly tasted the food Hunt ordered, although by the time the meal was ended she felt better. Hunt loved her. She clung desperately to that one fact. As long as he loved her, everything was bound to turn out all right in time. Sooner or later, he would see things her way. Because it was perfectly absurd for him to expect her just to sit around waiting for him to come back, when she could be having a lovely time.

"Are you in on that United Nations poster job this afternoon, Jingles?"

Jingles started and looked up. Howdy Wilson stood behind her, smiling her friendly white smile that people were apt to notice even before they saw that she was beautiful.

"No. I turned it down because Hunt was in town. You know Hunt, don't you?"

"Of course. But what are you two looking so glum and silent about?"

Hunt smiled back at Howdy, and Jingles stiffened. There was something in that smile which Hunt never gave her, a friendly admiration. Howdy had something, Jingles had to admit with a sudden pang of fear, something natural and real about her to which all men responded. Hunt was responding now, with an openness and honesty Howdy could bring out in people.

"Because I've just been refused," he was drawling in his deep vibrant voice. "Or perhaps I should say we've just refused each other, and decided the whole thing was a bad idea."

"You wouldn't have to ask me twice," Howdy said. She gave them a casual wave of the hand and moved away.

Jingles' eyes narrowed. Had that been just a meaningless crack or had Howdy and Hunt known each other?

"Did you used to date Howdy?" Jingles asked and her voice was sharper than she had meant it to be.

"A few times. She's one swell gal. But what's on our program now? Since the City Hall is out."

"Anything you like," Jingles offered, suddenly desperately anxious to please Hunt.

He gave her a long straight look. "I should spend some time with my family. If we're not being married, the situation is a little different. But we'll do something this evening. All right?"

Jingles lifted her chin. "Of course," she said coldly. "Let me make a phone call to the agency. They were having an awful time lining up girls for that job and perhaps there's still something open. Might as well take it if there is."

AFTER that, Jingles hardly had time to draw a deep breath for the next two hours. The job was still open, and she had to change her clothes and her make-up, and get to the place.

Then for more hours she stood in the open courtyard of a midtown hotel. This poster should be effective, Jingles thought with the one part of her mind which was always on her job. The flags of the United Nations were lined up in front of a row of classic pillars, and in front of each flag was a girl. Finally the last of the color shots was taken, and the girls began to move away.

Howdy strolled over to Jingles and said with casual directness, "I'd call this a pretty poor substitute for Hunt."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"You would?" Jingles asked, brittle emphasis on the 'you.'

"Sure." Howdy tossed back her heavy black hair and laughed. "I always prefer the real thing to the tinsel. Just thought I'd tell you."

"Think it will do you any good?" Jingles asked with an insolent confidence she was far from feeling. Something cold and terrible was clutching at her heart. Howdy had so much, beauty and honesty, and a way of knowing exactly what she wanted and going directly after it and getting it. Howdy was Hunt's sort of a girl, much more than she was, Jingles saw suddenly.

"Could be," Howdy admitted. "Hunt calling for you here?"

"Yes."

"I thought he might," Howdy said and deliberately continued to wait beside Jingles.

This was really too much, she thought furiously. Howdy had calmly declared war and was moving in. There should be some way of getting rid of her before Hunt arrived but Jingles could not see what it was.

And worst of all was Hunt's pleased smile when he came striding into the courtyard and saw Howdy.

"Come with us for a cocktail," he invited cordially. Then with a mocking grin, "Do. I mean it. Jingles and I have got past that twosome stage."

"I'll make a phone call and be right with you," Howdy agreed.

Jingles watched Howdy stride across the street, knowing she was breaking another date whether Hunt realized it or not. Then Jingles turned angrily on him.

"Do-you need to make it quite so obvious you're only keeping our dates because you're a little gentleman and won't stand a girl up?" she snapped. "If you'd rather be alone with Howdy, I won't spend my evening sitting home, I assure you."

Hunt reached out and gave Jingles' golden hair a sharp teasing tug. "Now. Now. If we were married, dear, you could go around making a noise like a jealous woman. As it is, I'm just a soldier having himself a time while he can, and two beautiful girls are obviously better than one."

Howdy had cocktails with them and then dinner. She had a wonderful time and Jingles did not. It was Howdy whom Hunt danced with most of the time, and they danced well together. It was Howdy who got Hunt to talk about the camp and why he had not applied for officers' training. But finally, just as Jingles was clenching her fists under the table cloth and swearing she would walk out and leave the two of them together since they so obviously didn't need her, Howdy reached for her purse.

"I have a feeling that I'm an hour late for my date," she said lightly. "And he's a boy who doesn't wait more than two hours before he gets the idea he's being stood up. I couldn't do that."

"I'll call you before I leave town," Hunt promised.

"Do that," Howdy invited, and turned to Jingles. "See you in the movies. Because you don't go to church, do you?"

Hunt didn't get it, but Jingles did. Howdy had told her as plainly and triumphantly as she could that Jingles was welcome to a career, but Howdy wanted Hunt. And intended to get him and thought she could, since Jingles had refused to marry him.

"It's late but let's go to the Terrace Club," Hunt suggested.

Jingles looked up, wide eyed. "Like this? I'd have to dress."

Hunt chuckled softly. "Of course. I'd forgotten. You must never let your public down. Well, why not? I'll take you home and come back in an hour."

He called for a waiter then and settled their bill.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

JINGLES dressed slowly, but she thought fast and furiously while she did it. Hunt had made it plain enough that he was through arguing. Either she married him or they were through. As long as there had been no one else around who interested Hunt and he had been willing to go on waiting for her to change her mind, Jingles had been sure of getting what she wanted. But now she was frightened. Howdy knew what she wanted and men were notoriously susceptible on the rebound.

Jingles tried to analyze why Hunt had fallen in love with her. Now she could smile herself at the way they had met. That had been almost a year ago, when Jingles was just beginning to be known and was taking herself very seriously.

Jingles had strolled in to the local board to apply for her first ration card that day. She really had been something, from fur coat to golden hair flowing in the breeze and a sheaf of lilies laid across her arm.

Hunt had come in, searching for a friend, and had stopped dead still, staring at Jingles. Then his mouth had widened in a grin and he had walked straight over to her.

"What are you made up as?" he demanded. "Or are you advertising something?"

She had looked up at him, wide eyed and much too startled to take offense. Because he was probably the handsomest man she ever had seen in all her life.

"I'm not advertising anything now," Jingles had said, all serious and breathless. "But I do." Then it had still seemed a miracle to her that she was a successful model.

"And what's your name?"

"Mary Ann Johnson," she had said automatically and quickly corrected herself. "Jingles Blue, I mean."

Hunt had flung back his dark head and laughed. "Make up your mind. Which is it?"

"Jingles now. At—at the agency they thought it fitted my type better."

"And does your type pick up strange young men? Just long enough to see if we don't have some mutual acquaintance who can introduce us."

Her heart had been thudding much too fast for her even to care if they ever found a mutual acquaintance. "Not usually," she said, still terribly serious. "But I will."

Now Jingles sat at her dressing table, eyebrow pencil idle in her hand, remembering. That was what Hunt had liked about her, that honesty and breathless seriousness. Then the pose, the twenty-four hour a day job she had worked out for herself of being Jingles Blue, had not set. It had been merely surface and a surface that cracked very easily. Hunt had loved the Mary Ann Johnson he saw underneath it, not the Jingles part she had worked at so hard. That was the reason

NEW SUCCESS OVER ATHLETE'S FOOT

NEW SCIENTIFIC 2-WAY TREATMENT WITH QUINSANA POWDER -ON FEET AND IN SHOES – IS PRODUCING AMAZING RESULTS. IN TESTS ON THOUSANDS OF PERSONS, PRACTICALLY ALL CASES OF ATHLETE'S FOOT CLEARED UP IN A SHORT TIME.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Howdy could be dangerous. She had some of those qualities.

Jingles flung up her head. There was her answer. Tonight with Hunt she would be simple and sweet and sincere, very Mary Ann, and he would fall in love with her all over again.

Deliberately Jingles made up again, a softer make-up, not so perfect and sophisticated, and put on a white evening dress she had bought for a special job and never intended to wear in public. And she left off all the costume jewelry she loved. Would Hunt understand that she had no rings on her fingers tonight?

HUNT was late, and she knew him too well not to understand exactly what that meant and be frightened by it.

She had to play this smart, Jingles thought with panic clutching at her heart, just as smart as she knew how. Because, although they were alone for the first time in months, Hunt was making no move to take her in his arms.

With a confidence she did not feel, Jingles put her hands lightly on his shoulders and raised her face to his. She had planned the kiss she was going to give him, sweet and tender and gentle, and she kept it that way.

Hunt released Jingles and looked down at her, his dark eyes puzzled. "What was that supposed to add up to?"

"What would you like it to add up to?" she asked gayly.

Her heart was dancing to a love tune again. Hunt's kisses always did that to her and this one had been what she had wanted it to be, the kiss of two people very much in love.

Hunt looked her over carefully, the simple make-up, the white dress, the lack of jewelry. "I'd say it added up to what I was hoping for at lunch. But people don't change that quickly, so I don't get it."

"Then why don't you think it over and see what you get," Jingles murmured demurely. "Meanwhile, let's not miss the last show at the Terrace. It's new and very good."

Jingles was thinking some things over herself, and very fast, while they watched that show. She had not lost Hunt, not entirely, because for the first time today things were right between them. But only because she had given way on every point. And there was one point, her career, she would not give way on.

Suddenly Jingles' blue eyes sharpened and she almost laughed aloud. Of course. The obvious answer. The solution stood out a mile high. How had she ever missed it? She could have her cake and her frosting, too.

Hunt called for the check the minute the floor show was ended. Inwardly Jingles wondered how much of it either of them had seen. In the taxi Hunt turned to her, not touching her, but Jingles could feel their mutual electric awareness of each other's nearness heightening her pulse beat.

"I've got an answer but I'm not sure it's the right one," Hunt drawled. "Perhaps you'd better look in the back of the book and tell me."

"Really, Hunt," she laughed, "I've proposed to you once today. How many times do I have to do it?" Deliberately she lowered her voice, made it warm with tenderness and sincerity. "I've decided I can give up anything but you."

His arms were around her instantly and she was crushed against Hunt's broad shoulder. His kiss was all Jingles had dreamed of, passionate and adoring.

"You won't regret this?" Hunt questioned sharply. "I know how much you love your fun-ride."

"I love it, but I love you more. And I know I won't regret this." Jingles' voice was quite sincere on the last sentence. How could she regret anything, now that she had found the obvious solution?

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Then we'll be married first thing in the morning," Hunt said and his tone made it evident he had taken command of her life from this moment. "We've wasted one day. That's too much."

"But I'll go back to camp with you. We'll have time there," she promised.

JINGLES was up half the night. There were a hundred things to do. Jingles decided she would wear a white suit and a white flowered snood. That was a model's fate. She spent her life posing in beautiful white satin wedding dresses, and then wore a suit to her own wedding.

And there were calls to be made, a long one to the agency and some shorter ones breaking appointments. But by ten o'clock Jingles was dressed and waiting.

Hunt brought flowers, a mass of white blooms, and a hugh square diamond and a plain gold wedding ring. He liked a plain ring, Hunt explained. It seemed more solid. And Jingles, who adored glittering diamond circles, agreed demurely.

"This apartment," Hunt said suddenly. "What have you done about it?"

"It's up for sub-lease," Jingles lied. "Everything's arranged."

"I wish I could say the same," Hunt grimaced. "City Hall first, but I'm afraid our wedding lunch is going to be business too. There's some property I want to sign over to you and some other legal papers to get in order. My lawyer is such an old friend that he'll be hurt if we don't take him on with us to Forty-Three. When that's finished, we're free."

"The awful, awful hardships a girl who marries a wealthy man has to put up with," Jingles mourned mockingly.

But Hunt understood. He knew it never had been his money that interested her.

Hunt snapped his fingers at a sudden thought. "Howdy! I promised to call her."

He never forgot a promise. Hunt was old-world in his punctilious courtesy and regard for keeping his word. Not even his own wedding would make him forget.

"Howdy," Jingles murmured and her blue eyes gleamed. "Do call her. Why don't you ask her to join us at lunch, too? That will keep the whole thing from being too grimly business and maybe your lawyer likes a pretty girl."

"Of course. It was nice of you to think of that."

But she knew the thought had not been nice at all. It was sheer feminine maliciousness. Howdy had declared war, and Jingles wanted Howdy to see in the most convincing way possible who had won.

Jingles had dreamed often of her wedding, pictured it a hundred different ways. Now it wasn't the crowds, the matter-of-fact atmosphere of City Hall, the lack of attendants and a formal party, that spoiled it for Jingles. It was something she could not quite put her finger on, but something definite enough that when she and Hunt left together, man and wife, Jingles felt she had been through a frightening little farce that had nothing at all to do with being married. All through the ceremony her mind had been much too busy reminding herself of things she must keep hidden from Hunt to hear the promises they were making or realize the significance of the words.

The papers were signed and pushed aside as quickly as possible. Then they went on to Forty-Three where Howdy was waiting for them.

The toasts were drunk, and then Howdy turned to Hunt.

"So you think you'll be in the country only another three months?" she asked, making small talk.

"As far as I know," Hunt admitted, surprised. "How'd you hear that?"

"I saw the notice on the bulletin board above Jingles' appointment sheet that she isn't taking any jobs for the next three months."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

JINGLES' mind raced frantically. Howdy had not done this deliberately, although Jingles would not have put it past her to do it had Howdy realized the damage she could do with that remark. Jingles looked at Hunt and saw his dark glance of sudden angry comprehension, and felt something cold and icy clutch at her heart.

Hunt was too much the gentleman to make a scene or demand an explanation before the others, but Jingles saw the rage and determination behind his carefully controlled face as he tried to hurry the lunch to a close. She could lie to him again, Jingles thought, tell him the agency had misunderstood her instructions, but she knew instantly that would not work. Her only chance was to tell Hunt the truth.

And she had been so sure everything would be all right. She had planned it so carefully. Pretend to let Hunt have his way in everything and, after he left, go right back to her career. Hunt would be too far away to do anything about it then.

"I think we'll go back to your apartment," Hunt said with formal coldness as the party broke up.

"Hunt, you've got to understand," Jingles begged frantically. "It was just—"

"We'll talk when we get there."

He was taking her home, back to her own place. And Jingles had a premonition Hunt meant to leave her there. Alone.

"So this is up for sub-lease," Hunt murmured mockingly.

"All right. I lied about it," Jingles admitted. "But it wasn't all a lie. I love you, Hunt. I don't mind dropping out for three months or as long as you're in this country. But I can't spend the duration just sitting and waiting. You shouldn't expect it."

Hunt broke ruthlessly across her words. "I'm flattered. You love me enough to give up your fun-ride for three months. Or, with a great effort, possibly even more. Unfortunately I've always labored under the strange delusion that marriage was for a life time."

"It will be. When you come back. If—"

"If you're not in the movies by then or something else too terribly exciting hasn't come up," Hunt drawled. "I don't doubt you love me, Jingles. I wouldn't even worry about other men while I was gone. But I want a wife, not a famous face."

"Just what do you want me to do then?" Jingles cried angrily.

"Not a thing." Hunt was completely poised and impersonal. "Do whatever you like about that farcical little ceremony we went through this morning. Get a divorce, an annulment, or let it stand. It doesn't matter to me, and I'm sure it didn't mean much to you."

"You can't just walk out," Jingles exclaimed.

"I don't know any clearer way of saying I never want to see you again."

JINGLES sank weakly into a chair, staring at the door that had closed so finally behind Hunt. He was really through this time. She had lost him.

So what did she do now? Jingles stared bleakly at nothingness. She could go out, do the town gayly, shrug off curious questions with a laugh and treat the whole incident as an amusing impulse. That was what she would have to do if she wanted to go on being Jingles Blue.

Jingles half rose out of her chair and reached for the telephone. Then she sank back. It was not that she couldn't face people. It was simply that it was not important. Being Jingles Blue was nothing at all, compared with the heartbreak that was tearing her to pieces.

Perhaps it had been necessary for her to lose Hunt completely before she realized she had spoken the truth when she said she could live without anything but him, Jingles thought. But if she went to Hunt now he would not believe any promises she made.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Then she set her chin. If Hunt had any feeling at all left for her, she was not going to give up without a struggle. Her blue eyes narrowed and then she did pick up the phone.

The story made the evening tabloids. Jingles Blue, whose face had launched a thousand products and brightened a hundred night spots, had retired. Her marriage to Hunt Robertson had ended her career and, since he would be in the active fighting soon, she had sworn not to be seen in another night-club until he returned. Jingles felt she could not have been more explicit. Surely Hunt would see that and understand that when she made a public announcement like this, she intended to live up to it.

At midnight the doorbell rang. She hesitated a moment before she went to answer it. This was Hunt, she was sure, because if he had not seen the papers himself, other people had and would have told him. But for just a moment Jingles had to wait, until the mad thudding of her heart died down a little.

Then she fell back a step, with a horrified gasp when she saw the look on Hunt's face. His eyes were blazing, as he threw a crumpled paper on the table.

"I know you value nothing quite as much as your publicity," Hunt grated. "I know this is a wonderful break for you. But my family doesn't like to have its name smeared over papers like this."

"Publicity! Do you think I did that for publicity?"

"What else? I suppose you thought you'd get an equally big story in a week or two with the announcement that I'd insisted you go on with your career and your fun-ride. But I wouldn't advise you to try it. If you do, I'll be the one who gets a divorce and I'll state my reasons."

An answering angry flame blazed in Jingles' eyes. Hunt had reason to doubt her sincerity, but this was too insulting to be borne.

"Do that," she invited cordially. "I'll make the announcement and I'll use your name. It was an angle that hadn't occurred to me but it sounds all right. And get the divorce, too. That should be good for columns by the time I get through telling my side. It's possible the judge will believe I meant that announcement, because I did. And you won't look so pretty by the time you get through admitting you're so jealous of my career and everything else I enjoy that you wanted to hide me out with your family for the duration. And I was willing to do it. I really don't know what more I could have done to please you, unless I shaved my head and took to wearing sackcloth." She laughed a little, hysterically. "You haven't been any fun-ride for me, Hunt, but since you've suggested it, I'll make this pay off."

"Jingles." Hunt took a long stride toward her. "Jingles, you did mean it. You only put it in the papers for me to see, didn't you?"

"That was the original purpose," she said, her voice brittle. "But you've suggested a much better one."

Hunt chuckled suddenly. "There's nothing like the fury of a woman scorned when she's been trying to be honest. If you hadn't meant this, you wouldn't be so mad. Oh, Jingles, you funny kid."

"I'm not—" she began stormily.

But she was in Hunt's arms and he was kissing her. Jingles resisted stonily for a moment, and then she was kissing him back, quite madly and unreasoningly.

"Perhaps I have been selfish about your modeling," Hunt said at last.

She giggled, a very Mary Ann giggle. "Hunt, I'm afraid I was only a flash in the pan after all, not a pan in the flash. That was fun, while it lasted. But I've had enough. I've got the only ring I care about on my finger now."

Hunt grinned. "Then we'll see it stays there."

And he kissed her again.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

WEDDING FOR THREE

By ADELE HALL

A wedding can mean both happiness and heartbreak when two girls are engaged to the same man, and only one can be his bride.

"BRAT!" Carol said, as she dashed headlong from the room. Then she stopped abruptly, in time to avoid bumping into someone.

"Do you really think so?" he asked.

She looked up. It was Don Bishop, Laith Matson's fiancé; and Carol had just called her a brat. "Oh, I didn't know — That is, I'm terribly sorry. I—"

"Think nothing of it," he said. "I agree with you entirely, but I thought perhaps I was a trifle prejudiced."

"But you're going to marry her."

"Was," he corrected. "You heard what she said."

"Did you?"

He nodded.

That was terrible. Nobody should have heard that exhibition Laith had put on, least of all her fiancé. She had sworn and stormed because Don wanted to get married on a ten day leave, because she couldn't have all the usual wedding parties, because the gowns Madame Berthé had sent over didn't please her. Carol had modelled them, the ivory satin, the starched white chiffon, the pale blush taffeta, the exquisite lace. She had thought each one more enchanting than the last, but Laith had grown increasingly furious by the minute. Finally she had screamed, "Call off the wedding. I won't go through with it. I won't be married like a shop girl in a ready made piece of junk that looks like a lace curtain. Take them away. And you get out!" she screamed at Carol. "You look like a scarecrow. Get out and take that beruffled dish rag out of my sight!" She ended by throwing one of her mules across the room and flinging herself on the chaise longue in a temper tantrum.

That was when Carol had left in a hurry, silently vowing she had modelled her last frock for a pampered society moron, and audibly calling her a brat.

"You don't look like a scarecrow," Don said, as if he had been following her thoughts. "You make a very pretty bride in that gown. What did you say it was made of?"

"Starched chiffon," she said and started past him toward the room that had been set aside for her to dress in.

"Don't go," he said. "I need a bride very badly. The only reason I got this leave was to get married. How would you like to marry me?"

How would she like to marry him? She remembered the first time he had come to Madame Berthé's with Laith. Maxine, one of the other models, sighed and said, "How would you like to marry that?" Carol had sighed with her. She could think of nothing more wonderful than marrying Don Bishop. Every time she had seen him since then those words had returned to her memory. She hadn't ever imagined that he might be saying them himself. Too bad that he was only joking. Well, she had a sense of humor, too. It would be fun to play along with him.

"I'd love to," she said. "Just wait here until I change."

"But you'll need a gown. I like you in that one."

"Let's not overlook technicalities," she said lightly. "We'll need a license and things. I'll have Madame reserve the

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"How would you like to marry me?" Don said. "I need a bride very badly."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dress until time for the ceremony."

She blew him a kiss and went in to change.

SHE had expected their little game to end there but when she got outside Don was waiting. "Sorry I haven't a coach and four to whisk you away in. Will you settle for a taxi?"

"I'm going back to the shop in the truck."

"Is there room for me?"

Carol couldn't imagine a Navy lieutenant riding in a modiste's truck. "If you can take it," she said.

He could. They squeezed into the back and sat there almost smothered in finery. They laughed and joked about it for a while, then Don pulled something from his pocket. "This bounced back with our wedding plans," he said.

He held toward Carol a beautiful diamond ring, Laith's engagement ring, with a stone large enough to be illegal in a dim-out. "Would you like to try it for size?"

Carol slipped it on her finger reverently. She never had been that close to anything so gorgeous before.

"This goes with it," he said. And he took her in his arms and kissed her. It was the kind of kiss she had dreamed about, like a roller coaster ride with the thrills chasing up and down her spine. Carol forgot everything except the glorious excitement of the moment. She didn't know how long the kiss lasted, but presently Len, the driver, opened the door and said, "All out. Last stop."

In a few seconds she was back in the shop, and still wearing Laith's ring! She had intended to return it immediately, but that kiss had wiped any sane thought from her mind. It must have made Don forget too. Even people with his money didn't throw diamonds around so carelessly. It was a good thing she was honest. She would have the messenger take it to Don's apartment as soon as she had seen Madame Berthé.

Madame Berthé bustled in right then. "What did she take?" she asked.

"A temper tantrum."

"What do you mean?"

"What I said. She called off the wedding. And she won't need a gown."

"She's such an impetuous child."

"She's a spoiled, feeble-brained brat."

"Carol! Remember Miss Matson is one of our best customers. You must show more respect if you wish to remain with us."

"I don't wish to remain with you. I'm leaving."

"Leaving! Why?"

She was leaving because she was sick of parading before useless women in unnecessary clothes. She was going to get a real job. She was going to join the WAC, as she had been planning to do. But it seemed a shame not to give Madame a jolt.

"I'm leaving," she said, before she had time really to weigh her words, "because I'm going to marry Don Bishop." She waved her left hand under Madame's eyes and let the diamond glitter. Then she walked out to allow her to recover at her leisure.

IT WAS wonderful to walk out of Madame Berthé's and know it was the last time. It was wonderful to walk into the WAC recruiting office and know that finally she was about to do something worthwhile. The whole world was wonderful. Carol felt so good she treated herself to an expensive dinner and strolled home afterward, mentally thumbing her nose at window displays showing women's clothes. She felt so good that she wasn't at all prepared for the shock that awaited her in the evening paper. She and Don had made the front page!

For three cents anybody in town could read of the surprise romance between Don

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and Carol. And everyone would, too.

That charming bit of news would be Madame Berthé's work. Carol should have realized that Madame never would miss such a chance for free publicity. Why had she ever said she was going to marry Don? What would he think? What could she do?

All sorts of crazy schemes flashed wildly through her mind, and flashed out just as quickly. There wasn't anything she could do. She ended by locking herself in her apartment, telling the doorman she wasn't home to anybody who bore the slightest resemblance to a reporter, and sat down to await developments.

Developments were speedy, varied and volcanic. First Reese, Carol's very best beau, came storming in. She didn't want to see him, not at the moment. She wished she had told the doorman to exclude him, too. She was in no mood for explaining things.

By way of greeting, Reese said, "I was under the impression you were going to marry me."

He had asked her often enough, but she hadn't accepted. "I never said yes," Carol said.

"No wonder, with Don Bishop on your list. You're a fast worker all right, when a wealthy enough man comes along."

"Oh, Reese," she begged, "don't be difficult. Surely you don't believe that nonsense in the paper. It's all a mistake. It started as a joke."

"On me, I suppose."

"You can believe me or not," she said wearily. "I'm too upset to do anything about it."

Because she looked so confused and appealing, Reese would probably have calmed down; but at that point Laith Matson walked in.

"Just what does this mean?" she demanded shoving a newspaper under Carol's nose.

Even though Laith was acting badly,

Longing

Long is the day
When you're not here;
Long is the evening,
Bleak and drear;
Long, ah! long
Is the summer night
Though jasmine-sweet
And starry bright.

Long are the miles
That you must wend;
Long are the kisses
That I send;
Long are the hours
Till waiting's through—
No wonder I say
I long *for you.*

By Merryl Lee

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Carol was glad to see her. If she straightened things out with Laith, it would be easy to apologize to Don. And Reese would believe her, too. "I'm awfully glad you came," she began. "The whole thing is a terrible mistake."

"I'll bet you're glad," Laith said, still shaking the paper wildly. "You think this will make a better story than ever, you cheap publicity hound. Maybe you sweet-talked Don into making a fool of himself this morning but we'll soon fix that."

"You didn't seem to want him this morning." Carol couldn't resist that jibe.

"I want him now, though, and I'll get him. Even if it's just to show the world that I'm a little better than a mannequin who's no more than a servant!"

That was too much! Laith had called her one name too many. Carol was going to take her down a peg or two even if it meant another fuss with Reese.

Her voice was dripping honey as she said, "Why don't you ask Don whom he's going to marry?"

Laith made an angry noise in her throat and slammed out of the room.

Now, Carol thought, I've really done it! At this rate I'll soon have everybody in the world angry with me. She straightened her shoulders to wait for Reese's tirade.

"Let's get this straight," he said. "Are you, or are you not, going to marry that twerp?"

"He's not a twerp!"

"Is that your answer?"

If Reese didn't trust her enough to wait until things cleared up, she didn't care what he thought. She wouldn't be needing a best beau in the WAC anyway. "Why don't you run along with Laith?" she said. "You can get your answer at the same time she does."

Reese slammed out of the room too.

WHEN he had gone, Carol was about to collapse into a chair; but true to the law that causes all bad luck to arrive in threes, there came another knock at the door.

She opened the door cautiously. It wasn't a reporter; it was Don. At last there was someone who might be able to talk with her sensibly and calmly.

"Oh, Don," Carol said contritely as soon as he was inside, "I'm so terribly sorry."

"So am I. It was quite a surprise."

"It's all my fault. I very foolishly told Madame Berthé I was going to marry you. It was just for fun, but she believed me."

"Carol! What are you talking about?"

"The newspapers. Haven't you seen them?"

"Yes, of course I have."

"You saw them? Well, isn't that what you're sorry about?"

"I was talking about the ring," he said. "I discovered that it had bounced back again. This morning you acted as if you liked it. You're very changeable; aren't you?"

"You weren't actually serious about marrying me?" Carol said wonderingly.

"Of course I was. Why did you think I called the newspapers to announce it?"

"You called the newspapers!" Her heart began pounding madly. He really wanted to marry her! He hadn't been

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

joking this morning. Then she remembered. Of course, he hadn't been joking. But he was only trying to save his face. He had been given a leave in order to get married and evidently he was out to marry anybody.

"You can start being yourself again," she said. "You can even have your original wedding. You won't have to have the wrong bride after all. Laith was here. She wants you back."

"And you don't want to marry me?"

Certainly she wanted to marry him, but not as a substitute for Laith. "No," she said and hoped he believed her. "And I never did. If you run very fast, you can still catch up with Laith and your wedding."

"But I don't want Laith!"

"Now who's being changeable?"

"Not I," Don said. "It's been a long time since I honestly wanted Laith, but we were engaged and I couldn't do anything about it. You always looked so sweet to me, Carol, darling, every time Laith dragged me with her to Madame Berthé's. That was the only reason I ever went along. Then when I saw you this morning, after Laith broke our engagement, I decided to make up for lost time. I always knew you were the one for me."

Carol's heart started pounding again.

"I'm sorry if you thought I was interested in any old bride," he said. "You see, I thought you felt the way I did."

"But I thought—" Carol began.

"Darling," Don said huskily, "I wonder if both of us are doing too much thinking?"

Carol's eyes said the right thing. And the next instant he gently took her in his arms.

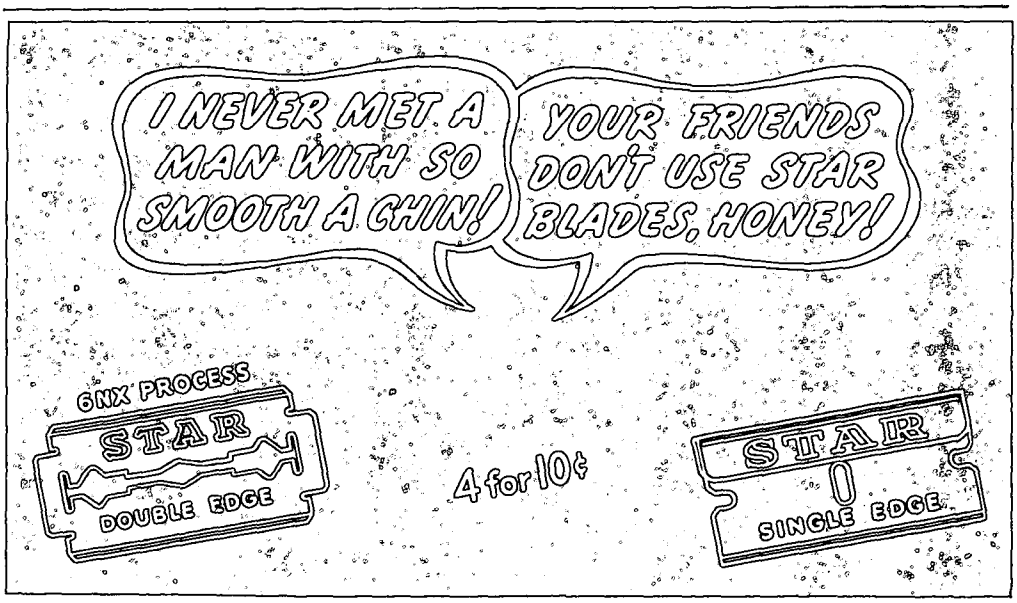
"Wait a minute," she said, as he bent to kiss her. "Would you marry a WAC?"

"If I loved her. Why?"

"Because I enlisted this afternoon in the WAC."

Don appeared startled for a moment, then he grinned proudly. "Good for you," he said. "I can't think of a better place to keep a wife for the duration. We'll have time for a wedding and the first lap of a honeymoon and we'll be off to the wars together."

This time when he bent to kiss her. Carol's lips were ready.



PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

WHAT'S IN A KISS?

Masquerading as a country cousin was one way for Susan's disappointed suitor to share her dates with her fiancé.

By HELEN HIBBARD DAU

SUSAN left the office at noon and stopped in the drugstore downstairs for a sandwich and a cup of coffee.

Another lonely Saturday afternoon and evening, she thought gloomily. There was no use hoping that Bruce would get away from the cocktail party. He always said that he would leave at six and take her to dinner, but it never worked out that way. His sister, Diane, took care of that. The party would go on for hours and then they would all decide to go to dinner and Diane would say that of course Bruce had to go along. He was host and he couldn't walk out on their guests.

Diane didn't like Susan. She chose to ignore the fact that Bruce was engaged to her. She never asked Susan to any of her gay parties, and there was nothing Bruce could do about it. He lived with his wealthy sister, because his job at the bank paid him a small salary. There was no way for him to force Diane to accept Susan.

Susan stirred her coffee viciously and glared across the drugstore counter. Every time she thought about Diane she got raging mad. Diane wanted Bruce to marry one of her rich friends, and she was a bad influence on him. It was Diane's fault he drank so much. She encouraged him. Of course, Susan had to admit, it didn't take much to encourage him these days. He felt so bad about being rejected by the Army that he just drank to forget.

If only she could make Bruce see that if they got married they could get along on both their salaries. Then he would settle down and be all right. She would make him so happy.

"And I'll bet some people tell you you're beautiful," said a voice at her elbow.

Susan jumped a little and turned her eyes to the soldier who sat on the next stool, grinning at her. He had a nice, dark attractive face, a twinkle in his eyes and a teasing twist to his firm mouth.

"But take me for instance," he said. "I don't see how anyone can be beautiful and a grouch, too."

"Will you kindly mind your own business?" Susan said coldly.

"It is my business. You don't have to look at yourself but other people do."

"Well, you don't," she snapped.

"Oh, yes, I do," he said carelessly. "I took one look at you and something happened. I knew right away you were a girl I had to look at whether I liked it or not. It's written in the books. Too bad for me too. I like girls who smile."

"You're annoying me."

"You'll like it after a while. I grow on people. Are you mad about something that happened in the office this morning? Did your boss bawl you out?"

Susan refused to answer. She took a sip of coffee and lighted a cigarette.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Diane smiled at Susan. "I like your cousin," she said, possessively reaching for his arm.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Do you have to work Saturday afternoons?" he asked. "Or could you go to the movies?"

She glared at him. "I *could* go to the movies, but I am *not* going to the movies."

"I guess you're right. It's too nice an afternoon. We can do a movie tonight. How about the zoo?"

"I wish you'd go to the zoo and stay there!" Susan said between her teeth.

He clucked his tongue. "Nice girls shouldn't swear."

"I didn't swear!"

"It's not the words you use. It's the meaning you put into them. I'll bet there's some sort of fine for swearing at men in the U. S. Army."

Susan called for her check. Before the boy could hand it to her the soldier reached for it. He picked up his own, too, got down off the stool, and walked over to the cashier. Susan was so mad she was speechless. She went after him furiously.

"How much is it?" she demanded.

But he had already paid for her sandwich and coffee. He took her arm. "Well, how about the zoo?"

"Naturally I'm not going to the zoo with you!"

He shook his head sadly. "What kind of a girl are you, turning a man down after you've let him pay for your lunch?"

"I didn't let you pay for my lunch! You did it deliberately."

"You didn't utter one word of protest until it was all paid for. Now you want to hurt my pride by offering me the money. Don't you care about a man's feelings? We're sensitive about things like that."

"Oh, honestly, you—"

"Come on. Be a sport. What's the harm in walking around the zoo with a soldier on a sunny afternoon? Or have you a boy friend who might object?"

That stopped Susan. She thought about Bruce having a good time at a party while she sat alone. Maybe if he found out she didn't just sit alone he'd decide to marry her right away.

"All right," she said suddenly. "Why not? No harm that I can see."

THEY rode up to the park on top of the bus. He told her that his name was Timothy Colver, that he was from Ohio and had come to New York when he graduated from college to find work on a newspaper but he had joined the Army instead. She told him that her name was Susan Lane, that she was from upstate, and that she was secretary to a lawyer. She didn't tell him about Bruce. Somehow she didn't feel like talking to him about Bruce.

He must have been to the Central Park Zoo before. He knew just how to get there. He bought a bag of peanuts and Susan said, "Don't feed the animals."

"Does that mean you, too?" He handed her a handful of peanuts. "You looked wild enough to be put in a cage a little while back."

"I was thinking of someone I didn't like," Susan said, and then she laughed. "I didn't realize it showed."

"There!" he said, looking at her appreciatively. "I knew you'd be beautiful if you laughed. I like brown hair and blue eyes best, and noses that tilt just like that one."

They wandered around laughing at the animals and at the people who laughed at the animals. When they tired of it, he said, "How about a beer?"

They strolled out of the park and found a place to have a beer.

Tim said, "It's just four o'clock. We could do a movie, then have dinner and maybe go dancing. Or do you have a date, Susan?"

She shook her head.

"Gosh, that's swell!"

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

His dark eyes smiled at her warmly and a little flutter ruffled the calm beating of her heart. Impulsively she reached over and touched his arm. "You're sweet, Tim," she said softly. She felt surprised at herself but she was having such a good time with him on a day when she had expected to be restless and lonely. She was grateful, and she liked him.

They went to a movie and afterward had dinner and went dancing. But they didn't dance long.

"I haven't very much time," he told her. "I've got to catch a midnight train. And I want to make sure you get home safely, Susan."

Although she protested, he insisted upon a taxi. "It's quicker," he said. "And maybe I'll have time to have a cigarette with you."

She had a small apartment in a brownstone house in the East Thirties. The living room was tiny but cheerful. Susan had made the chintz covers and draperies herself.

"It looks like you," Tim said. "It looks like home."

Tim didn't even sit down. He lit a cigarette and paced up and down nervously, as if there was something he wanted to say but couldn't get out.

Suddenly he stopped in front of her chair. "Susan, I've got to go now. I—"

Then he pulled her into his arms and kissed her tenderly. And Susan found that she didn't mind. She closed her eyes and put her arms around his neck.

When he let her go, she looked at him in confusion. "Tim," she said shakily.

"Oh, Susan, I like you," he said huskily. His arms tightened around her hungrily.

"I like you too, Tim," she whispered.

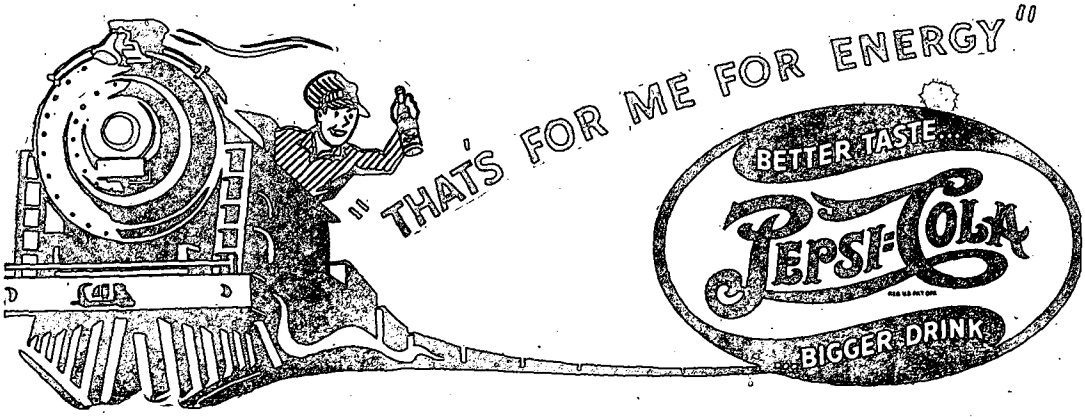
"We'll get married," he said firmly. He kissed her quickly. "I'll let you know when I can get off again."

He ruffled her hair gently, smiled, and then he was gone.

SUSAN stood staring at the closed door. Tim had rushed without giving her a chance to explain about Bruce. She shouldn't have let him kiss her when she was in love with someone else. She felt ashamed. Yet he had been nice. She thought of his warm smiling eyes, his firm teasing mouth. Yes, his kiss had been exciting. But it didn't mean anything. It was just because she was lonesome for Bruce.

And it was silly to worry about Tim's feelings. Of course he hadn't been serious. It was just a line. Soldiers were like that. He probably had forgotten all about her by the time he caught his train.

Because the next morning was Sunday she loafed in bed. Bruce wouldn't call until afternoon. He would be sleeping off the party. She wondered if by any chance he had called her last night when she was



PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

out. It wasn't likely. But if he had she decided to tell him that she had been to the movies. He was terribly jealous of anyone in a uniform. If a soldier or sailor so much as looked at her Bruce sulked. She didn't want to hurt him. She loved him.

Bruce turned up about three o'clock. He was a tall slender handsome young man, charming and sophisticated.

He took her into his arms and said, "I missed you. Oh, Susan, how I hate to be away from you."

"You don't have to be, ever," she told him. "We could be married. Between us we'd have more money than a lot of couples."

"You don't think I'd let my wife help to support me?"

"Your sister helps support you now."

"That's different. She's my family."

"Wouldn't I be your family, Bruce?"

"Not that way. You'd be my wife. A man wants to take care of his wife," Bruce said steadfastly.

He kissed her and after a moment Susan broke away from him.

"We can't go on like this forever, Bruce. We're not getting any place."

Bruce lit a cigarette and sighed. "I know," he said. "I'm no good to anyone—the Army or you. I ought to go out of your life and leave you free to find someone else."

"Bruce, no!" She flung herself back into his arms. "I didn't mean that. Don't leave me. I just want more of you. I want us to be together always. I'd die if you left me."

He lifted her chin and smiled into her eyes. "You mean that?"

"Of course I mean it."

"I couldn't leave you," he said huskily. "You're too sweet. I need you, Susan."

He kissed her and she clung to him. The moment of panic eased away.

The evening the telegram arrived Bruce had come to pick her up for dinner. He was sitting on the couch smoking a cigarette and he asked, "What is it?"

"What?" Susan said looking up from the telegram in a daze. "Oh, nothing."

"People don't send telegrams for nothing."

Susan tried to think fast. "It's just this cousin of mine," she said. "He's in the Army. He's arriving tomorrow on furlough."

"Well, why are you looking so upset about it?"

"I'm just surprised," she said weakly.

"We'll show him the sights," Bruce said.

"I'll get my hat," Susan said and sped into the bedroom. She closed the door and read the telegram again.

DARLING. HAVE A WEEK'S FURLOUGH. HURRAH. HAVE RING TOO. MISSED YOU LIKE CRAZY. I LOVE YOU. I LOVE YOU. I LOVE YOU. LOVE, TIM.

She tore it into little bits and dropped it into the basket, feeling completely panicky. What did a girl do when she was engaged to one man and another man got the idea that he was engaged to her, too? Tim even had a ring. If Bruce found out . . .

Susan groaned and put her hat on without even looking in the mirror.

OVER the dinner table, Bruce said, "We'll get up a party for your cousin tomorrow night and take in some night-clubs."

"Oh, no! No!" Susan said quickly. "He—I—think it would be better if I saw him alone the first night. We'll want to talk about the family and everything."

"Nonsense," Bruce said. "He's in the Army now. He won't want to waste any time off discussing Aunt Hattie's rheumatism. He'll want to see the sights."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Tim's very quiet and reserved," Susan insisted. "He's shy. He doesn't like people. Honestly he doesn't."

"The Army's probably changed him. And you don't expect me to sit around listening to you two talk about your relatives all evening?"

"But you don't have to be there," Susan said quickly. "You could spend the evening with your sister."

"Darling, don't you want to show me off? After all you're engaged. He'd think it was funny if your fiancé didn't turn up to meet your relatives."

"Well," Susan said desperately, "I could say you were out of town."

"I think you are ashamed of me."

"Of course not! It's just that he's not sophisticated. He doesn't drink or anything."

"Oh, I see," Bruce chuckled. "You're afraid your city fiancé will shock your country cousin. I'll be very conservative, darling. I'll behave myself."

Susan felt herself sinking deeper and deeper into an awful nightmare. There was just one hope. Tim hadn't said what time he was coming. If she could get hold of him first she could explain everything.

He called her before she left for work the next morning and she practically fainted with relief.

"When can I see you, darling?" he demanded happily.

"I'm leaving for the office right now," she told him. "But you could take me to lunch."

He groaned. "That's too long to wait. Couldn't you tell your boss you have a headache?"

"No," Susan said. She set a place for him to meet her at one o'clock.

When she walked into the hotel lobby and saw him coming toward her, with his eyes warm and eager, she couldn't help feeling a little flutter of excitement. What girl could when a man looked at her like that? And she had almost forgotten how good looking he was.

Without saying a word he took her into his arms and kissed her.

"Don't, Tim," she gasped weakly.

"I don't care who's looking," he declared firmly. "I want to shout from the rooftops that you're my girl. Oh, Susan, you couldn't be more beautiful and sweet than I've been remembering you—but you are."

"Tim, we've got to talk sensibly."

"Darling, I'm being more sensible than I've ever been in my whole life. I'd be out of my mind if I didn't love you. Any man would."

"Let's eat," Susan said crazily. She was feeling a little dizzy. "I think I'm hungry—or something."

THEY went into the dining room and when they sat down Susan looked at him and blurted out, "Tim, I've got to tell you in a hurry. I'm engaged."

"Sure you are." He grinned and took a small box from his pocket. "It's not very big, Susan, but what it means is big."

"Tim, please, please," she pleaded desperately. "You're making it so hard. I meant I was engaged to someone else and have been for a long time."

The light died from his face. He stared at her. "Oh, I see," he said in a strained voice. "But why aren't you married, Susan?"

"We're waiting until he makes more money. He lives with his sister and she doesn't approve of me. She wants him to marry someone rich. I know it all sounds awful, but Bruce is really wonderful. It's just that he loves his sister and he won't marry until he can take care of his wife by himself. He doesn't want to marry a rich girl."

Tim was watching her face closely. "He's not in the Army?"

"No. He didn't pass his physical. He feels terrible about it."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Tim looked at the small box in his hand and slowly dropped it back into his pocket. Susan felt like crying. She hated to hurt him.

"Susan," he said, "we can go on being friends, can't we?"

She shook her head. "I'm afraid not, Tim. Bruce is terribly jealous, especially of anyone in uniform. It makes him feel bad, not being in uniform himself. He was there when your telegram came last night. I couldn't tell him the truth so I said it was from a cousin. Right away he planned a party for you. I'll have to tell him tonight that you were just here for a few hours and left by an afternoon train."

Tim didn't say anything. He drummed his fingers on the table.

"I'm terribly sorry all this happened, Tim. I didn't mean to let you kiss me that night. I don't know why I did. I was sure you wouldn't take it seriously or didn't mean it seriously. Soldiers kiss all the girls, don't they?"

"This one doesn't," Tim said grimly. He met her eyes. "Do you let any man kiss you who wants to in spite of the fact you're engaged?"

Susan stiffened. "Don't be insulting. Of course I wouldn't let anyone but Bruce kiss me!" Then she blushed. "I don't know what got into me that night."

Tim grinned suddenly. He didn't look the least bit hurt. "Well, let's forget the whole thing and enjoy our lunch," he said.

"Thank you, Tim," she said. But she felt a little startled. If he could forget it as quickly as that he couldn't be hurt. He must not have been serious after all. But why the ring then?

"I'm sorry you bought the ring, Tim. You can take it back, can't you?"

"It doesn't matter. I expect I'll need it again someday."

She stared at him a moment. She felt herself getting angry. How often had he used that ring before? It was probably a line he used on every girl he met. It didn't strike her as being at all funny.

She finished her lunch in cold silence. Tim didn't seem to notice. He talked cheerfully about his life in the Army. When it was time for her to get back to the office he shook hands and wished her good luck.

It's good luck to get you out of my life, she thought angrily as she walked away from him. A flirt with very fancy trimmings—that was all Timothy Colver was. She should have known it that day he was so fresh about paying for her lunch and getting her to go out with him.

"WHERE'S the country cousin?" Bruce demanded, when he called for her that evening. "Don't tell me he didn't turn up? I've arranged for some of the gang to meet us at the Tent Club later on."

Susan was ready for that. "He's come and gone," she said. "He didn't explain things very well in his telegram. He just meant that he was passing through town on his way home. I had lunch with him."

"Oh, well," Bruce said, "we can have the party anyway. Had the Army changed him much?"

"Oh, no," Susan said. "Still the same old country cousin."

"Well, get your bonnet, darling. I want to get on with my drinking."

Susan walked into the bedroom to put on her hat. She wasn't looking forward to the evening. Not if Bruce was bent on getting tight. It meant that he wouldn't be any good at work tomorrow. I've got to get him to marry me right away, she thought. He can't go on like this.

The doorbell rang.

"I guess it's the laundry man," she said as she came out of the bedroom to answer.

But it wasn't the laundry man.

"Hello, Cousin Susan!" Tim said loud-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ly. He stood there grinning from ear to ear.

Susan stared at him speechlessly.

"I missed my train," he said. "I remembered about the party so I thought I'd come around and see if it was still on."

"Why, sure, sure," Bruce said. "Glad you can make it."

Tim ignored him for a moment while he put his arms around Susan and kissed her soundly. She pushed him away, hard.

Tim grinned at Bruce. "Just a cousinly kiss. We're a very demonstrative family. I suppose you're the lucky man Susan's going to marry?"

The two men shook hands. Susan stood there in a helpless rage. For two cents she would have picked up a lamp and hurled it at Tim Colver. What did he think he was doing anyway?

He looked at her. He put an arm across her shoulders. "Dear Cousin Susan." He kissed her again.

Susan gave him a little shove. She smiled at him threateningly. "Don't you remember, Cousin Tim? It's just *your* side of the family that's demonstrative. The Lane's are very reserved."

"The Lanes reserved?" Tim threw back his head and laughed. "Remember the time they locked your father up for—"

"Tim!" Susan glared at him. "You know very well my father was never locked up for anything."

"Oh, say," Tim said, trying to look embarrassed, "I didn't mean to give anything away. I sort of figured Bruce was practically in the family and—"

Susan turned to Bruce. "Bruce, you are not to believe a word he says. From the time he was a child of two he's made up the most awful stories. He never outgrew it."

"Why, Cousin Susan! It was you who made up stories. Even your own mother used to wish you could be as truthful as your cousin Tim."

Bruce was looking very bewildered. "Perhaps we ought to go and eat," he suggested.

Susan decided she wouldn't wear a hat. She wasn't going to leave Tim Colver alone with Bruce even for the two minutes it would take her to get it.

WHEN they got to the restaurant Bruce excused himself, saying he had to make a phone call.

"I want you to leave us," she said the moment Bruce was out of earshot. "I want you to leave us this minute. I'll say you suddenly discovered a train you could catch."

Tim clucked his tongue and grinned at her. "I wouldn't want to be responsible for your telling a lie, dear Cousin Susan."

"You've made me tell more lies in half an hour than I would in a lifetime. What are you doing this for anyway, Tim Colver? Is it your idea of a joke?"

"I'm afraid I won't be able to take that ring back. A man can't just throw away a diamond."

"I'll bet you never bought it for me."

"You bet wrong then," Tim said.

"Oh." She stared at him a moment. "But you said you expected to use it some day."

"So I do." He reached over and touched the third finger of her left hand. "Right there. Did you think that I was going to give up so easily? When you told me about Bruce I decided to investigate. I've discovered he's not the man for you."

"Tim Colver, you're despicable! You're deliberately trying to break things up between Bruce and me!"

"I certainly am. I've got a lot to go on. You're not the type who likes another man to kiss you when you're in love. You liked my kissing you. And you know it."

Susan's face colored. "I hate you!"

"I don't consider you engaged anyway. You're not wearing a ring."

"What's in a ring?" she snapped.

"It's like a wedding ring," Tim said

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

solemnly. "A man likes a girl to wear one to show that she's his. It's like any symbol. It stands for something."

She suddenly saw Bruce coming back into the room. "Tim," she said pleadingly, "I told him you didn't approve of drinking."

Tim's eyes twinkled. "I'm going to have a cocktail. I like a drink or two."

"Tim, please!"

"Did you make your phone call?" Tim asked Bruce.

"Yeah, sure did," Bruce said. It was obvious that he had had a quick one while he was out. "Had to talk to one of these couples that are meeting us later. Party's all set."

"Good," Tim said. "How about a cocktail?"

Bruce looked at him. "I understood Susan to say you didn't approve."

"Oh, Susan likes to pretend that none of the family drink. That's on account of Aunt Emily."

"Aunt Emily?" Bruce said.

"Didn't she ever tell you about Aunt Emily at the church supper?"

"Bruce," Susan said angrily, "it's a lie. Everything he tells you is a lie."

"Let's order a cocktail," Bruce said. "Then I want to hear about Aunt Emily."

SUSAN gave up. What could she do with Tim since he was so bent on telling fantastic lies? She didn't even try to listen. She drank her cocktail but she couldn't eat. She dreaded going to the party but she didn't know how to get out of it. She was pretty sure Bruce and Tim would insist.

When they got to the Tent Club Bruce waved across the room to a table where two couples and an odd woman were sitting. The odd woman was Bruce's sister, Diane. Susan's heart sank. She hadn't dreamed that Diane was going to be there. Diane already disliked her. When she heard Tim's stories . . .

"I didn't know Diane was going to be here," she murmured to Bruce.

"Oh, sure," said Bruce. "Had to have a girl for Tim."

Susan didn't like the idea of the suave, beautiful Diane being for Tim. She looked at Diane as they approached the table. She was wearing a beautiful white crepe afternoon dress. Her blond hair was piled high on her head. There was a veil over her eyes, fastened in her hair with a rhinestone pin.

Bruce introduced Tim as Susan's cousin, and Tim sat down beside Diane.

The orchestra started playing and Tim asked Diane to dance.

She watched them circle the floor. They were smooth and beautiful. They were laughing into each other's eyes. Susan thought, I shouldn't let myself get so tired I feel like crying.

As Diane and Tim came back to the table, Diane was saying, "All right, tomorrow. I'll be out all morning but I'll phone you the time and the place."

So they had a date already.

Neither of them sat down. They lifted their glasses and took a sip. Diane smiled at Susan.

"I like your cousin," she said.

"Good old Cousin Tim," Bruce said. "I want to hear some more stories about the family."

"When we finish this dance," Tim said, "I'll tell you about the time Uncle Henry escaped from the asylum." He put his arms around Diane and they danced off.

Susan looked at Bruce. "Bruce," she said, "it's not true—any of it. He's not even my cousin. I've only seen him once before in my life. He fell for me. He's just acting like this because he wants to break up things between us."

"So he's not your cousin?" said Bruce angrily.

"No. I just said that because I was afraid you'd think—"

"Everybody lies to me," Bruce said.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He rose and glared furiously at Susan. "We'll see what Cousin Tim has to say for himself and then—"

"Bruce, please. Everyone's looking."

"Bruce, behave yourself!" It was Diane coming back to the table with the others. She looked at Susan. "I'll take care of him. He's had too much to drink."

Susan got to her feet. She had to escape from the scene that Bruce was determined to create. Somehow she found her way to the dressing room. Two women were powdering their noses at the mirrors. Susan sat down in an easy chair. She lit a cigarette.

The two women went out. The door opened again and Diane came in.

"Hello, Susan."

SUSAN was suddenly uncontrollably angry. She put out her cigarette, got to her feet, and faced Diane.

"Why don't you let him alone?" she demanded furiously. He doesn't need you."

Diane met her eyes levelly. "I'm afraid I don't understand."

"You encourage him to drink."

"You're mistaken," Diane said quietly. "I encourage him not to drink. I know Bruce can't stand drinking."

"You let him live with you. You keep him on the lap of luxury when you know it's ruining him."

Diane's face was suddenly stricken. "Have you ever had a brother you loved very much who was a weakling?" she asked. "One you knew would go to pieces if you didn't watch over him?"

"You hate me!"

"No, I don't, Susan. I just hate you for Bruce. You're not hard-boiled enough for him. He'd hurt you. He'd ruin your life. You couldn't handle him."

"He'd be happy with me. He'd get over being hurt about being rejected from

FOLLOW THE ROMANCE TRAIL TO THE FAR-FLUNG CORNERS OF THE WORLD

TO ENGLAND — with Shelly Arden, Frances Booker's courageous heroine, who braved enemy submarines to put a whole ocean between her and the man she loved because she thought he wanted to forget her. IF I CAN'T HAVE YOU . . . is a story to remember.

TO AFRICA—with Second Leader Connie Garrett, a WAC in Algiers. Connie had dozens of admirers, but the man she wanted had dozens of girl friends. REUNION IN ALGIERS is the kind of story that only Hope Campbell could have written.

TO HAWAII—to Hula Moon Ranch where Maida Jenkins awaits the hero's return. Only Rusty Mason came to the home port with a glamorous convoy, and in the meantime Avery Woods, the well-known ace, literally appeared out of the blue into Maida's own back yard. You'll enjoy Ann Fowler Hill's intriguing people in ONCE IN A HULA MOON.

AND—

ALL AROUND THE U.S.A.—with such favorite Romance authors as Vina Lawrence, Blake Reed, Adele Hall, etc. All in the November issue.

10¢ THE BEST IN LOVE STORIES

Romance

Now On Sale

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the Army. He'd stop drinking because of it. He'd make something of himself."

"Susan," Diane said gently, "Bruce doesn't drink because he was rejected by the Army. He was rejected by the Army because he does drink. They told him if he'd cut it out and get himself into shape they would accept him."

Susan stared at her. There was pain in Diane's eyes but there was truth, too. Susan turned away.

"I—I'm going home," she said. "Will you tell them I had a headache or something? I'm sorry about everything, Diane. I've hated you. I didn't understand the truth. I thought I could do a better job than you've done."

"That happens often, Susan. A woman in love with a man blames some other woman for his weakness—his mother, his sister, his wife. She's sure that with her he'd be different."

"Yes," Susan said. "Good night, Diane."

She went out. She got into a taxi and rode home. She felt numb mentally and physically. She was sure that she couldn't go to sleep but she flung herself down on the couch in the living room and fell asleep with all her clothes on.

It was still dark outside when she woke up. The clock said four. She took off her clothes, washed her face, and got into bed. But now she really couldn't sleep. She was thinking about how quickly Tim had fallen for Diane, how nice Diane was, and how pathetic for all her money and beauty. She was thinking how wonderful someone like Tim would be for Diane.

All next day at the office she kept watching an older woman who was in charge of bookkeeping. Miss Henry had been with the firm for more than twenty years. Outside of her job her chief interests in life were her cat and the movies. It was possible then to go on and on, to grow old, and to have nothing much in your life. Every time she looked at Miss Henry fear gripped her heart. And yet she kept on looking at her. She kept thinking, That's what my life will be like, that's what I'll be like.

Susan walked all the way home from the office. She meant to stop and eat, and yet every time she started to turn into a restaurant she knew that she wouldn't be able to choke down any food.

She wearily climbed the two flights to her apartment, and then stopped short. On the top step, leaning against the wall, Tim Colver sat sound asleep. Her heart started beating very fast, and she tried to step by him quietly.

A STRONG hand reached out and grabbed her arm.

"Hello, Cousin Susan!"

Susan gulped. "You'll trip me. What are you doing here?"

He got up. His lips curved into a quiet smile. "I had to talk to you, Susan. I had to say I was sorry."

"It doesn't matter," Susan said. She went past him and put her key in the lock. He followed her right in.

"I had lunch with Diane today," he said.

"How nice!" she snapped.

"She thanked me for breaking up things between you and her brother. She said it wouldn't have worked. But, Susan, if you love someone I guess it'd work no matter what anybody else thought. What can I do to make things right again?"

"You fool!" she said coldly. He looked as if she had struck him. She told herself it didn't matter, trying to keep her mind and emotions hard. "I never really loved Bruce. I wanted to reform him, mother him, or something like that. I was all mixed up about him. I never knew what he was really like. He's probably forgotten me already or will soon enough. You haven't ruined her brother's life. You can go back to her with a clear conscience."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Tim stared at her. "Hey, you don't think I've fallen for that babe, do you?"

"Don't you dare call Diane a babe! She's swell!"

Tim shook his head. "I don't get it."

"You don't get a lot of things. You ought to be smart enough to know that by now."

She suddenly turned her back on him. "Please go."

He caught her by the shoulders and swung her around, forcing her to look at him. "You're crying! You say you're not in love with him. You try to send me off to Diane. Then you cry." He stared at her for a moment and then he grinned. "I know why you're crying. I know all about women."

"You're so smart," she said shakily. "Please go away."

"Women cry for diamonds," he said.

She tried to pull away from him but he gripped her left hand hard. He slipped on the ring and then gently kissed her.

"There's a diamond," he said. "You don't have to cry any more. It's not such a big one and maybe it's not all paid for yet, but it will be."

"I don't care anything about diamonds."

He put his arms around her and his warm dark eyes searched hers. "But you do care about what it means, Susan?"

He didn't know so much about women after all because she had her diamond and she suddenly put her cheek against his shoulder and was crying harder than ever.

"I was so afraid you loved her," she sobbed.

"Her?" he said in amazement. "With you around? Oh, Susan!"

His arms crushed her close and his mouth found hers and Susan wasn't afraid of anything any more. She never would be. Not with Tim's ring and all it meant on her finger.

HERE'S THE EXCITING LINE-UP FOR OCTOBER RANGELAND ROMANCES

BELLE OF LOST VALLEY
Novel of Frontier Love
by Art Lawson

SASSY LITTLE LADY
Rollicking Novelette
by Ruby la Verte Thomson

RANGE QUEENS LIKE KISSING, TOO!
Novelette of Rangeland Sweethearts
by Marian O'Hearn

PATSY'S MAKE-BELIEVE SWEETHEART
Romantic Western Novelette
by Isabel Stewart Way

Also stories and features by Agnes Best Nafziger, William Fargo, Myrtle Juliette Corey, C. W. Windas and others.

October Issue on Sale Aug. 27th!

RANGELAND ROMANCES 10¢

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

DON'T CALL ME

By JULIE PAINE

"You can't interfere with my life this time!" the girl said. "Why don't you admit you want me for yourself?"

NAN HOWLAND'S blue eyes were anxious this morning. At any moment a squadron of Navy bombers was due in from the west coast and the responsibility of clearing the field and bringing them in safely was hers.

I would draw a job like this on my first watch in the control tower! she thought nervously. Until she joined the WAVES four months ago she hadn't known what

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

SWEETHEART

Nan didn't know whether Al proposed because he loved her—or because he was trying to forget another girl.

real responsibility was. But today she was making up for it. To be placed in the control tower of one of the largest naval airfields in the country and to be expected to bring in a whole squadron smoothly on her very first watch was a tough assignment.

She moistened dry lips when the leader's voice came through the earphones. "Commander Blake of Squadron CX calling airport control tower. We're com-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing in. Clear the way for us, fellow, and give me the dope."

"Airport control tower, Boca Raton Field reporting, sir," Nan's voice sounded calm enough. "Reporting clearance for Squadron CX." She briskly assigned them runways.

His voice was amused. "So now we've got girls in the control towers! Don't mess us up, sweetheart, we're heading in."

Nan was in too serious a mood for gay chatter. "Reporting wind direction and velocity, sir." She proceeded on with directions.

They came in low over the bay, their wings glinting in the morning haze. The field was clear, runways were assigned and the rest was up to the pilots. She felt fiercely proud that she was a third class petty officer in a Navy that could turn out pilots as skilled as these.

Suddenly she heard the sputter of an exhaust, low and dropping fast behind the tower. Her head turned sharply and she saw a small yellow training plane and knew at once that it was in trouble. Terror settled down on her like a vise but she managed to cry into the speaker, "Commander Blake, Squadron CX! Stay off field! Training ship approaching from southwest for landing!"

A bad crash seemed inevitable. She stood as one paralyzed, a tense, slender figure in Navy blue slacks. She saw the leader buzz the ground in front of the tower and veer sharply up in a deafening roar of motors. Then the second and third Avenger followed until all eight planes were over and behind the tower in the safety of open blue sky. She watched the trainer limp in and taxi across the field and then she closed her eyes and said a prayer of thankfulness.

Commander Blake's voice cut savagely through to her ears. "Nice going, sweetheart! You'd make a good traffic cop in the middle of a cornfield. This time we'll come in on my all clear. What's the matter, do you need bifocals or are you just naturally careless?"

Nan's face was white. She thought miserably, So ends my life in the WAVES. More than anything she had wanted to do this job well and now she had made a mess of it. She had known the trainer was up and she should have made sure all was well with it before she gave the squadron clearance to the field. She shivered, thinking of the crash which had been averted by a split second of timing and leadership on the part of Commander Blake.

WHEN Yeoman Brady climbed the ladder to relieve her, Nan blinked back insistent tears and went proudly toward headquarters in answer to the call she had got from the commandant's office. She lifted her chin because she was Gregg Howland's sister and Gregg had been awarded posthumously the Congressional Medal. "For gallantry in action outside the line of duty," the letter from the President had said.

Suddenly she thought of the squadron leader and his fresh attitude. She said aloud, "Commander Blake," and frowned. An angry gleam came into her eyes as her lips formed the name. Gregg's best friend at Annapolis had been an Al Blake, a good looking, tall Virginian. Al Blake had taken Jeanne Mallory away from Gregg and Gregg had never got over it.

Her eyes sparked fire and her round chin thrust forward stubbornly. If this squadron leader turned out to be the Al Blake who had been so underhanded and unfair to Gregg, she would fight for her rights. She had given orders to clear the field and if some greenhorn trainee had developed motor trouble she couldn't help it. Furthermore Commander Blake had had no right to be smart over a communication set.

Commander Blake was Al Blake all right. Nan recognized him instantly when

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

she walked into headquarters. He was older and even better looking than the photographs she had seen so often in Gregg's school year book.

He looked her up and down and grinned. "Don't worry, sweetheart," he said. "The Commandant's in Washington this morning and I wouldn't report you anyway. I sent for you because I wanted to scare you and because I wanted to see what you were like. What's your name?"

Her eyes were cool and contemptuous. "Yeoman Nan Howland, sir. And I'm going to report what happened if you aren't. You seem to think a communication set is your own private line!" She started past him and then glared at him because he was holding her arm with a firm hand.

"Don't be a little fool!" he growled. "You'll just get the kid in the trainer grounded. It happens he's my brother and I've just talked to him. What happened wasn't deliberate on his part."

Nan said very low, "Take your hand off my arm, sir!" She walked past him, head high, and asked the CPO at the desk if she could see Captain Smithers. "I want to report a breach of conduct," she said aloud so the Commander would hear. She didn't care if his brother was grounded. No three striper was going to hush her on a matter which might have resulted in real tragedy. It was her duty to do something about it.

Captain Smithers listened to her story and barked out a lot of questions. Then he called the CPO. "Send in Commander Blake and round up Ensign John Blake."

Nan stood straight at attention. Commander Blake came in the room and shook hands warmly with the Captain. Then the door opened again and a tall, shy faced young man entered the room.

The Captain looked from one to the other and then addressed Ensign Blake. "What happened, Blake?" he questioned.

The boyish face clouded. "I lost my head, sir. The gas line was plugged up and I headed in against orders. I could have stalled around up there but when I saw Al's formation coming in over the bay, I got excited. When you haven't seen your brother for two years, you get a one track mind. All I thought of was getting on the ground to say hello."

"You can't afford a one track mind when you're flying." Captain Smithers was curt but friendly. "I'm sorry to have to ground you because you've been doing fine flying and the Navy needs you as fast as we can turn you out. But I can't overlook this. You jeopardized men and materials this morning, Blake."

For an instant Nan felt like a good old-fashioned tattle tale but then when she saw the mocking lights in Al Blake's eyes, she felt angry again.

"Johnny came to report," Al said and stared across at Nan, "but I sent him scooting. It's been my experience that when a lesson's well learned, the commanding officer would rather not hear about it. That is, when nobody got hurt."

Captain Smithers frowned as if he were trying to hide the smile that played at the corners of his mouth. "Another thing, Commander Blake. You understand that the communication system set up in the tower is strictly for military purposes. Our WAVES are doing a remarkable job here and we don't want them demoralized, Blake. You will be more businesslike." He fiddled with a pencil and looked up at Nan. "As for you, you're absolutely right to report anything you consider a misdemeanor. A sense of responsibility to duty is highly commendable and never let anyone deter you from choosing the course you believe right. You'll make a good Navy man."

She said, "Thank you, sir," and felt at once praised and rebuked. The Captain was a very human man and he had tried to be fair to everyone concerned but it hadn't been to his liking to ground Ensign John Blake. Again she felt a little

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sense of guilt. Ensign Blake had seemed like a nice person and since he hadn't been soloing very long it was understandable why a plugged up gas line excited him.

SHE was thinking this when Al Blake stepped up beside her and matched his stride to hers. "You're a sweet little thing—maybe in your sleep," he said. "I hope you're proud of yourself for getting my brother grounded. He made a mistake, sure, but if it had been your mistake and no harm had been done he'd have left the tattling up to you. When you're young and new at a job you're entitled to one error."

"Not when I'm in the tower!" she cried furiously. "I'm not going to listen to you. I don't like you and nothing would make me happier than the assurance I won't have to bear any more of your company!"

His eyes glinted with amusement. "But I like you, sweetheart. And I'm not the sort of lad who is discouraged easily. You know you're the prettiest tantrum I've ever seen. Your cheeks would make an apple turn green with envy. And your lips!" he sighed exaggeratedly. "I used to look at your picture, when Gregg and I bunked together, and wonder what you'd grow up to be. You were a plain looking brat in those days but I always liked your nose. It had character."

Nan walked faster and ignored him completely. She was angry with herself for allowing him to disturb her. A violent mood like this was foreign to her usually calm disposition.

He wouldn't let go her arm. "I'm taking you to dinner tonight and tomorrow night and the night after and so on. Nothing's too good for Gregg Howland's little sister so I'm cancelling all my other dates and devoting all my time to you." The mocking laughter suddenly left his voice. "Gregg was the best lad who ever lived and when I heard about him, I made up my mind to transfer my attention from the Japs to the damned Nazi submarines. I'm going to send them to the bottom in wholesale lots and every bomb will have Gregg's name engraved on it."

She could hardly speak for the pain in her throat. "I wish I could believe you," she murmured. Suddenly she wanted to believe him. If Al Blake wanted to make amends in his own heart for what he had done to his best friend, Nan felt she had no right to discourage him.

He was silent and she thought how different and likeable he was now. She said, "I wish Gregg could know you wanted to be friends again. It hurt him when you went to sea without giving him an honest explanation about Jeanne."

"Jeanne didn't marry me so what's the point of hashing it over now? She got what she really wanted, a radio career."

She thought there was bitterness in the way he said it. In front of her barracks she hesitated a moment, feeling sorry for him because it was evident that Jeanne Mallory had thrown him out on his ear, too. She changed the subject and gave him a friendly smile. "I'm sorry I got your brother grounded. I suppose I could have left the matter up to you and him."

"No." He shook his head. "I was wrong. You stick to what the Captain told you and you'll always be right. That was serious business this morning and I guess it won't hurt Johnny to think about it awhile. I'm just overanxious for him to get his wings. And now that we're agreeing, how about that dinner tonight?"

"You're asking me to break rules again, Commander. I'm not supposed to date officers, but since you're asking for it, I'll take a chance."

His fingers pressed hers so warmly that a new and strange little thrill hammered in her heart. She went into the building feeling happy over the prospect of seeing Al Blake again.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

NAN went to dinner with Al three evenings that week. She found herself liking him much more than was comfortable, since his interest in her was strictly along friendly lines. She supposed this was because he was still in love with Jeanne Mallory. It was annoying and it hurt to find him faithful to a girl who wasn't worth his little finger. Jeanne had proven that she was thoroughly selfish and vain, the way she walked out on Gregg without any consciousness of wrong doing and the way she had thrown Al over for a career as a radio actress.

On Thursday evening they went to Miami Beach for dinner and afterward they danced. Al was a splendid dancer and, held close in his arms, she was happier than she had been at any time since Gregg had died.

Her eyes glowed radiantly into his and she wished with all her heart that she could make him forget Jeanne Mallory. "Why are you so silent tonight?" she asked and her lips were softly parted and breathless with the pleasure of being close to him.

He frowned and studied her face soberly. "I've been thinking I have to break our date for Saturday night and I'm not happy about it. I'm ordered up to Pensacola and I won't be back until Monday. And then in a few days we're off."

She said, "Oh really, Al?" and didn't try to keep the disappointment out of her voice. In her heart, she had prayed fervently that Al wouldn't go away soon. She was happy when she was with him because he filled the vacant, lonely spot which had ached in her heart for months.

On their way back to the field at midnight, Al's big hand suddenly reached out and tilted up her chin. "Was I imagining things a while ago or did you sound sorry that I'm going away?"

Tears blurred her eyes. "I am sorry, Al, because I'll miss you. It's funny for me to be telling you this because I'd planned to hate you if we ever met. I always imagined you were a ladies' man who went around making love to every attractive girl you met. I never understood that you were seriously in love with Jeanne."

"I never was." She tried to see his expression, knowing it was hard and bitter again. "If I thought I was, I soon got over it. She wasn't good enough for Gregg and everybody at the Academy knew it except him. Jeanne was interested in your father's money and prestige and she was foolish enough to brag about it to me. So I did my best for a friend and saved him from Jeanne." He stopped and pulled Nan's warm brown hand to his lips and kissed it. "Why talk about the luscious Jeanne? She's so far in the past, I want to forget her. I want to remember you, Nan. You're my kind of girl."

She gave a queer, sobbing little sigh and then his arms went around her and he murmured out his love to her. "I've played around a lot but it's because I don't feel I'm in a position to ask you to wait for me. I meant to say good-by to you and nothing else but good Lord, Nan, I love you. Darling, why are you letting me hold you like this?"

"Because I love you, Al!" Her lips brushed his cheek. "I want to say it over and over and hear you say it, darling."

His dark head came close, his lips restlessly seeking the haven of her mouth. He breathed passionately, "Nan, don't give me this kiss unless you mean it for always. Unless you're sure you love me and are willing to wait for me. I may not act like the kind of lad who keeps the one woman on a sacred altar in his heart, but I am. I've always had the wrong reputation, but only the people who love you can look through and see how you really feel inside."

The deepest happiness she ever had known overflowed in her heart and she

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

offered her lips unreservedly. Al pressed them hard against his in sweet, yielding fire. After a long moment she whispered, "Hold me tighter, Al! Darling, darling, I mean it for always. I've wanted you to love me, since the beginning, only I didn't know it. I've been afraid you were in love with Jeanne."

Her head fell on his shoulder. "I didn't know love was as great and beautiful as this. It's all that counts in the world. Darling, hurry back from Pensacola because we have so little time left. I love you, Al. Let me say it, darling." Her hand trailed over his cheek and the hard definite line of strong mouth and chin.

There was tenderness in his low voice. "I don't deserve you, Nan. You're too good for any man. The instant I heard your voice that morning something clicked in my mind and I knew what you'd be like even before I saw you. You're the kind of girl who will believe in a man through thick and thin and spur him on to big things because of your inspiration. Nan." He pulled her hand to his breast. "This heart is pounding for two people in the world, you and Johnny. Always believe that, Nan. You two are all that count with me."

She snuggled her head close to the wings over his heart. "And just four days ago I thought I never wanted to see you again! Love does amazing things. Has it improved my disposition as much as it's improved yours?"

He grinned and his white teeth flashed in his tanned face. "You're an angel with spirit. You had a right to be sore at me that morning. I antagonized you on purpose because I didn't want to fall in love with you. It isn't easy for a girl to wait for a man who lives with danger. Even after the war I'll live with it, Nan. I'm just that type."

"I wouldn't want you any different!" she said softly, as Al bent to kiss her again.

NAN found out at ten o'clock the next morning that she was off duty until Monday. Three WAVES had been flown down from Jacksonville for temporary duty at the field. Nan knew they needed to gain practical experience as radio control operators but she didn't like the idea of time off when Al wasn't around.

When she saw Sarah Brady at chow, Nan was open for any suggestion to help pass away the time until Monday. When Sarah suggested that they go into Miami for two days, Nan leaped at the idea.

Sarah was good company. She was full of pep and knew Miami and the beach like a book. The first day Sarah took Nan on a Cook's tour of the place and the second day they lay on the beach and talked.

In the late afternoon, Sarah said, "I know a place where they serve the best stonecrabs you ever put in your mouth. It isn't exactly the Waldorf Astoria and you'll see all sorts of odd people but our uniforms will protect us. People who don't want to be seen together go out there. It's a good place for dating when you're cheating on your husband or boy friend. It's just a bar and a dining room built on a pier over the ocean but the food is magnificent."

When they got there after a fifteen minute taxi ride, Nan agreed that the place wasn't the Waldorf Astoria. It was a cheaply constructed building running three-fourths of the length of the pier and the interior decorations were garish and loud. Each table was in its own little room shut off from the bar and the other little rooms by thin partitions painted with jungle scenes.

Nan had to admit that Sarah knew good food. "I'd like to bring Al here some evening," she told Sarah. "Just for the stonecrabs, of course. Anyway there's no harm bringing your future husband to a place like this even if it is on the waterfront."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

They could hear subdued voices in the room behind them and they looked at each other and laughed. Sarah said, "Wouldn't it be awful to run into somebody you know? I mean like your best friend's husband? Talk about life's most embarrassing moment—that would be it!"

A man's low, scornful laugh came through the partition and there was a quality in it which struck a chord in Nan's mind. She had heard that laugh before and she sat very still, her fork poised over her plate, her eyes thoughtful. Al had laughed like that the times he mentioned Jeanne. But Al was in Pensacola.

"You can't interfere in my life this time!" It was a girl speaking in a quick burst of anger which carried far. "Why don't you admit you want me for yourself? Don't you think it is slightly ridiculous to always pretend you're protecting somebody from me? First it was Gregg and now it's Johnny."

Gregg and Johnny. . . . Gregg and Johnny! The names ran agonizingly through Nan's brain, paralyzing it so she couldn't think. Al's in Pensacola! she told herself numbly. This is Miami and Al is in Pensacola.

"If you could only be like a girl I know," the man said and his voice belonged to Al.

Nan got slowly to her feet, her face white. Her knees buckled weakly with each step but the determination in her heart to know if Al was in the next room carried her forward. She felt Sarah's wide, amazed eyes on her and she managed to say, "I'll be right back."

Then she was standing in the arch between the bar and the next small room looking at Al, her broken heart reflected in her eyes. She stood there like a blue shadow just an instant and neither Al nor Jeanne looked her way. Al was holding Jeanne's hands across the table and gazing at her with smouldering eyes.

Nan said softly to Sarah, who had followed her, "I don't feel well, Sarah. I'd like to leave."

"I WON'T care!" Nan told herself severely but she was like a person battling with a dread illness. When she thought of Al the hopeless ache was too much to bear and yet she could think of nothing else.

On watch Monday she listened for his voice to come over the radio. Maybe there's some explanation, she thought, but it was like grabbing at a straw. The look she had seen in Al's eyes couldn't be explained away. There had been a fierce, violent passion, something on fire in that look he was giving Jeanne and remembering it made Nan feel as though her heart lay bleeding in her breast. Jeanne had been right. Al was fighting his love for her, but he hadn't conquered it.

Al didn't come in Monday and Nan went off watch feeling numb and dazed. She didn't even see Johnny Blake until he touched her arm. He said, "You look as low as I feel. We're kindred spirits. If you're off duty let's go out and celebrate our gloom."

Nan shrugged slender, drooping shoulders and said, "Why not?"

They had a steak sandwich and coffee at a little restaurant across from the north gate. The real Nan was a million miles away and in her place was a strangely gay and reckless girl, who laughed at everything and let Johnny kiss her.

They walked hand in hand along the ocean and Johnny's low young voice was comforting. "I don't feel bad now, Nan. Maybe it's because there are two of us. The truth is I'm relieved. Jeanne's the first girl I ever got serious about but I've been thinking it's funny the way she always makes me feel sore at myself. If you love a girl you ought to be happy. With Jeanne, I always felt as if I'd eaten green apples. She acts as if I'm in swaddling clothes and I'm only two years younger!"

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Nan said, "So your brother double-crossed you and went to Miami to meet Jeanne." She laughed sharply. "Nice brother you have!"

Johnny defended Al. "He thinks his judgment's better than mine. He used to know Jeanne and he doesn't want me to run around with her. I hate to admit it but he's right about the gal. She isn't dependable. One minute she's crazy about you and the next she's throwing the come on signal over your shoulder at some other lad."

Nan didn't tell Johnny she was in love with his brother or that she had seen Jeanne and Al in Miami. Instead she told him about her brother and let Johnny think that loneliness was responsible for her mood.

Johnny's eyes reflected the shine of the starry night. Outside the barbed steel fence that enclosed the field, he pulled her close to him and his kiss was eager and boyish on her lips. He was so earnest that her eyes blurred with warm tears and she put her arms around his neck and returned his kiss. "Good night, dear Johnny," she whispered.

A queer, hard laugh came from behind them and for an instant, Nan stared up into Johnny's face and wondered if he had laughed.

"So this is the way you wait!" The voice belonged to Al and it cut through her heart. "Beat it, Johnny. I've got something to say to Nan."

Johnny stepped in front of her, his young shoulders thrust forward threateningly. "Don't tell me to beat it, Al. This time I'm telling you. I've still got plenty to say to Nan."

Al studied Johnny's grim face and then looked down over the broad khaki shoulder and blue epaulets at Nan. Suddenly he threw back his head and laughed. Nan winced and recoiled a little almost as though he had slapped her. Their eyes met and held fast a grim instant and then Al swung his lean frame around and disappeared.

SEVERAL times the following days, Nan had to talk with Al on the radio phone. He always said insolently, "Hello, sweetheart! How's the blond heart throb? Still picking them up and then stepping on them?"

The injustice of his insolence stunned her, but she fought valiantly to control the hard flow of incriminating words that she ached to speak in self-defense. Once he told her, "Give my regards to Johnny. I appreciate the brotherly love you're stirring up. He acts as if he's never seen me before and the next time will be too soon!"

To this she replied quietly, "I'm sorry, sir. You may come in now. South runway assigned to you. I'm issuing clearance to south runway, sir."

She was glad to see Johnny waiting for her when she went off duty. He said with an accusing grin, "You've been avoiding me, Nan. Gosh, honey, I don't know what came over Al the other night, insulting you the way he did. Nan, I am pretty crazy about you. I've been thinking about you every second."

Nan lifted large, troubled eyes. "No, Johnny, you aren't crazy about me. You mustn't be because I can't ever be crazy about you. I wasn't fair to you. I should have told you I was in love with Al. I'm afraid I'll always be because it's just one of those things you can't help. But I want to talk to you about him. He's your brother and he worships you and, oh, Johnny!" She drew a great ragged sob and added, "You've just got to square things between you before Al goes away again!"

Johnny's dark eyes were hurt and he repeated in a dazed voice, "You are in love with Al? Nan, the other night you acted as though maybe you and I—" He shook his curly head as though he didn't

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

understand at all, and halted suddenly.

"I know. I wasn't fair, Johnny. I didn't want you to like me too much. You were sweet and I was more miserable than I'd ever been in my life, but that isn't love. There'll never be anybody but Al." Her hand fell on his arm. "I wish you weren't so serious, Johnny, dear. I hate myself for hurting you but some day you'll find the right girl who will give you everything you deserve."

He smiled soberly. "You're the only one for me. But if it's Al, I guess I'll have to stick my chin out. At least I've got something to be glad for tonight. I'm getting off the ground tomorrow for good behavior."

"Fine!" Her fingers pressed his arm fondly. "We can be the best of friends if you're willing. Promise me you'll see Al before he leaves. It's the only way, Johnny."

He caught her hand close to his lips. "Okay. I'll go kiss and make up with brother, if you say so. Only I'd like to knock his block off for beating me to your heart."

She was silent a moment, gazing up at him through blinding tears. "Johnny," she said finally, "I'd rather you wouldn't say anything about me to Al. He and I have a high wall between us and if there's any hope for us, we'll have to tear it down ourselves. I have some pride, Johnny. I'd like to keep it."

She watched him stride away, a tall, lanky boy who caught at her heart with his sweetness. She wished that she could have fallen in love with Johnny. He would always be faithful and devoted and honest. Johnny never would say he was going to Pensacola on orders when he was going to Miami on pleasure. Johnny had no deceit in his clean young heart.

Nan slept better that night just because Johnny and Al would patch up between them. The next morning when Al's voice came over the phones, she was stunned at the quick anger apparent in his words.

"What do you mean throwing Johnny over? He's got circles under his eyes and he can't even talk about you. What kind of girl are you anyway? You throw yourself at his head and make him crazy about you and then you kick him out. You remind me of poison."

This time Nan was unable to control the anger which had been scalding her soul. She said contemptuously, "If you have any more to say, say it face to face like a man, Commander Blake! I can match you insult for insult and if you make one more personal remark over this system, I shall walk out of this tower and refuse to do my duty until you are removed from the field."

"Fair enough!" he answered in an odd tone. "I'm coming in, sweetheart. Get your compliments lined up."

SHE saw his wave as he came loping across the field from his plane and the arrogance of it stung her heart. Forty minutes later when she left the tower, he stood leaning against the fender of a gasoline truck.

"I'd almost forgotten how beautiful you are!" he murmured and his eyes were narrow and bright. "Here we are, man to man. What have you got to say for yourself?"

Her mouth curled down in scorn. "You're very sure of yourself. A little too sure for a man who makes love to two girls at once and doesn't have cleverness enough to know that the partitions are very thin at a place called "Kitty's" in Miami."

He was silent a moment. "So that's it!" he said finally. "You trusted me so little you didn't think beyond the merely circumstantial evidence of seeing Jeanne and me together. Even after that night when I told you all the deep and important truths in my heart."

"You lied!" she interrupted. "You told

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

me you were ordered to Pensacola!"

"And I went to Pensacola!" he answered savagely. "If I had known you had me on trial I would have told you I was going up there to make test flights in a new ship the Navy's trying out. I would have told you that Johnny was about to make a fool of himself over a girl who isn't worth her weight in salt. I went after Jeanne to tell her to stay away from him. I know the girl. It isn't in her to make any man happy and she isn't going to mess up Johnny's life. She's been striking at me through him because four years ago I decided she was a pain in the neck and I told her so. Jeanne's a scheming, vindictive little female and when a fellow doesn't tumble for her charms and enchanting ways, she gets mad like an elephant."

Nan closed her ears, unwilling to believe what he was saying. She remembered too clearly the smouldering lights in his dark eyes when he had gazed at Jeanne that evening. "You love her!" Nan accused him coldly. "You don't have the courage to admit it! You keep meddling in her life because you don't want anyone else to have her."

His hands were rough on her shoulders. "I love you but you're changing my mind. I don't know what you were doing in that tavern in Miami but I do know that you ran back here and played with Johnny's heart to get even with me. That kiss I saw didn't exactly discourage him!"

She said, "I was wrong. I'm sorry for that and I wish with all my heart that I could love Johnny. He's everything you aren't, honest and dependable and understanding."

"Thanks." His hands fell away from her. "I guess that says it all," he added grimly and turned his back and walked away leaving her standing there staring after him in mute misery.

Johnny begged her to see Al before he left but she refused. "It wouldn't do any good, Johnny," she said. "Al and I just don't mix well. It's Jeanne he wants but he won't admit it."

Johnny shook his head. "You're both being stubborn about nothing. I could have told you Al hasn't any use for Jeanne. Al knows everything about you and me because I've told him. He's backing out and deliberately giving himself a black eye because he's shoving off. He thinks you and I can work out something. He told me this afternoon that he isn't a marrying man anyway. He's just trying to give me clearance to your heart. Please tell him how you feel about him, Nan, before it's too late."

But Nan's pride was set in a hard, fast mould. She answered, "It's better this way. Al and I've said bitter, stinging things to each other that neither of us can forget. It's just too late now, Johnny."

So Al flew away and Nan and Johnny stayed on at the field. The days and weeks passed slowly and Nan was unable to put Al out of her thoughts for an instant. She began to feel as though her pride had been her own mortal enemy and to wish that she had gone to Al on her knees to beg his forgiveness. Nothing seemed to matter now that he was gone except the hope she cherished that he would get through each bombing mission and come home safely.

In August Johnny got his wings and said good-by. She heard from him often from the west coast port where he was training for embarkation. And then came his happy letter telling her he was getting married.

He wrote:

"I met her at the canteen and her name is Susan. She reminds me of you, Nan. She's good and sweet and she understands how I feel about you. She's a wonderful girl and we're going to be happy. Now all I want is to see you and Al hitting it off. He cabled me he's coming back to the states so maybe you'll be seeing him."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Nan was glad for Johnny. She spent half of one month's salary to buy the young pair a silver tray for a wedding gift. It was the afternoon she was buying the tray in a Miami Beach jewelry shop that she ran into Jeanne Mallory.

THE girl was breathtakingly lovely in a slim white dress draped closely to her superb figure. She stretched out a languid hand and said, "Nan Howland! How Gregg's little duckling has grown up and in the WAVES, too." She smiled and there was malice intent in her jewel green eyes. "I want to thank you for sending Al Blake off with a broken heart. It might make him a little more vulnerable to me. You see I'm mad about the boy and I've come down to convince him. You be a good little girl and stay out of his life," she added in a wheedling, insulting way.

Nan's chin went up and there was fight in her eyes. "If Al will have me, I mean to marry him, Jeanne. You've had four years to convince him and you haven't done it yet so you're not frightening me out of the race. If it is a race!" she finished coolly.

Jeanne flushed with anger. "We'll see. Al was very sure of you and I understand from a little bird who gets around that you let him down. Didn't you know that Al despises jealous, doubting women? The poor boy believes that love and trust go together."

"They do!" Nan cried and her eyes grew incredibly wistful. "I hope I am given the chance to prove he's right."

When Nan went on duty the next morning she felt queer in the pit of her stomach, as if something good or bad was going to happen today. Her watch in the tower went off smoothly and then when she saw who was climbing up the ladder to relieve her, she knew that what she had been feeling was bad news in the exquisite shape of Jeanne Mallory.

Jeanne's smile was mocking. "You didn't let me tell you yesterday that I was reporting for duty. I finished WAVE school two months ago and the course at Norfolk Naval Air Station and here I am, right where I want to be. This is Al's base because the Commandant has asked for him to do some instructing. My little lieutenant bird tells me everything, you see."

Nan gave her only a sweeping glance. "All right. While we're on the field we'll forget we don't like each other. Our jobs in this tower are much too serious for any petty feuding between us. If you want any help, I'll be glad to give it to you."

Jeanne's head went back in a ringing laugh. "Look who's going to help me! My dear, I'm one rating ahead of you already. I was pretty good in school, you see," she said loftily.

Nan frowned and wondered how any girl could carry such vain superiority into the service of her country. She said, "It doesn't make much difference whether you're a third or second class petty officer, Jeanne. The only important thing is doing your job well and bringing men and planes in safely."

"You take care of your job and I'll do mine!" Jeanne snapped. "I'm here to show Al Blake that I've got plenty of gray matter."

"Jeanne Mallory, a WAVE!" Nan kept repeating over and over as she went to barracks. Well, all she could hope was that Jeanne would make a good WAVE and be a credit to the service.

There was a telegram from Johnny waiting for her. She read it innumerable times and her heart sang because Al was safely back in the States.

"Sue and I married eleven this morning," Johnny's wire read. "Al flew in for wedding and right out. Heading your way. Open your arms."

"Heading your way. Heading your

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

way," the words rang like carillons in Nan's heart. Al was her man and he was coming back to her. No one in the world was going to take him away from her this time. She had had so much of loneliness. There had been so many hours to think things out and now she knew how wrong she had been.

She dressed in a clean uniform and brushed her short curls until they gleamed in soft, feathery tendrils around her shining face. "I'll be out there waiting!" she sang under her breath and counted the hours on her fingers. The telegram had been sent at two o'clock. If Al was flying a fast bomber he would be in before midnight. When he came off the field, she would be there and she'd go right up to him and say, "I love you, Al!"

Her eyes closed with sheer ecstasy of anticipation. To feel the hard, warm pressure of his arms around her, to know again the fire of his kiss would be heaven on earth.

IT WAS raining when she went out at ten o'clock. The night was sultry and oppressive and she went into the chart room to see what sort of weather was posted. "Electrical storm," she read the words aloud and wished she was in the tower instead of Jeanne. An electrical storm could create enough static to jam the radio and cause trouble.

But she wouldn't let herself worry. Jeanne had had plenty of training and, anyway, nothing could happen to Al. He could set down a bomber on a handkerchief, flying blind. That was why he was the youngest three striper in the whole Navy.

At eleven-thirty, she went inside for coffee and doughnuts. The radio behind the canteen counter was on and the static was so bad that Nan's face grew sober. Al might have a hard time getting through to Jeanne in this noise. Again, Nan wished fiercely that she was up there in the tower knowing what was happening to Al's plane.

It was just as she stepped out into the drizzling night that she heard the distant hum of motors. She tilted her head, listening hard. There were two planes up there coming toward the field from opposite directions.

Suddenly she ran toward the tower, a nameless terror possessing her. Something was wrong up there! Those ships were heading from opposite directions!

She raced up the ladder, her eyes luminous with terror. Jeanne faced her in a sort of dumb confusion. "The radio's jammed! Al's up there and I can't get through to him!"

Nan reacted quickly, her mind calm and clear as crystal. She pushed Jeanne out of the way and grabbed a pair of code signal lamps and flashed out warning and direction into the murky night. Then, after forever, she heard the motors veering sharply off at opposite angles in loud straining roars. She signaled clearance to one ship and assigned a runway.

She put the lamps in Jeanne's shaking hands. "Bring in the other!" she commanded and stared at the stricken face. Jeanne swayed toward her, her nails biting into Nan's arms.

Nan shook her hard. "Don't you dare faint! You're a WAVE and you pull yourself together and bring in that ship!"

Jeanne's lips regained a little color but she said in real horror, "If they had tangled, Al would have been killed. I would have killed him, Nan!" She shuddered violently and moaned again, "I would have killed Al!" But she stood straight and gave the right signals to the plane that was circling the field awaiting clearance.

Nan patted Jeanne's shoulder, her blue eyes sympathetic for this girl who just had had the first hard lesson of a vain, self-centered life. "We don't always think clearly in a pinch," she said kindly. "No-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

body was hurt so forget it and next time you'll keep your head and know what to do."

She left the tower and didn't wait to see Al. Somehow she couldn't because of the misery in Jeanne's eyes. If Jeanne ever had known a decent emotion she was knowing it now, Nan thought. And Nan wanted to play fair.

"Love will find a way," she told herself as she lay sleepless in her bunk. "If I'd run to Al tonight, Jeanne would have thought I was claiming credit for averting that tangle. That wouldn't help Jeanne see the light that was dawning on her when I left the tower."

SARAH BRADY burst up the ladder in high excitement early the following morning. "I've been sent to relieve you!" she said. "You're wanted at headquarters and from the way Mallory's been bragging you up at the barracks, you must be going to get the Navy Cross or something. I didn't think I was going to like her but the way she's been tooting your horn for what you did last night makes me believe the gal's plenty all right."

"She is plenty all right!" Nan said and there was a spring to her step as she walked around the field toward headquarters.

The Chief at the desk grinned and nodded toward the closed door. "You can go in," he told her.

Al was sitting on the edge of the Commandant's desk and there was nobody else in the room. He said softly, "Hello, sweetheart! Where are those wide open arms Johnny ordered especially for me?"

Her eyes looked across at him hungrily and a shaky little smile trembled on her lips. "Isn't the man supposed to make the first move, sir?"

He jumped off the desk and came to her in two long strides and caught her hard against him. "Nan? Darling, are we going to begin again?"

She nodded vigorously and whispered, "Yes. And this time it's never going to end."

"Never!" he repeated and kissed her until she went limp in his arms. "I'm going to marry you, Nan. After all I owe you my life so why not hand it over to you right now?"

She lifted wet eyes. "Jeanne loves you, Al. She's proven herself a good sport and a good WAVE."

"I guess her one track mind branched out, Nan. She reported herself last night. She couldn't get over the fact that you didn't report around what you'd done for her. You've made a lady and a WAVE out of her." His arms grew taut around her. "We've both got three days leave which I've arranged. I'm not a very patient man, sweetheart. I've been wanting that wedding license too long so let's go get it."

She stood on tiptoe and kissed his nice square chin. "I'll be the patient one, Al. I know that even after the war there'll be lots of times when I'll have to be patient. For instance when I'm waiting for you to come home from India for supper. It's what I get for falling in love with a flyer who isn't a marrying man."

YOUR COPY MAY BE LATE

Because of the exigencies of war-time transportation, your magazine may be late sometimes in reaching you. If it does not arrive on time, please do not write complaining of the delay. This delay occurs after it leaves our office and is caused by conditions beyond our control.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

RENDEZVOUS FOR

By NANCY CROSBY

They rode on the carrousel and drank soda pop, just as if they were two children.

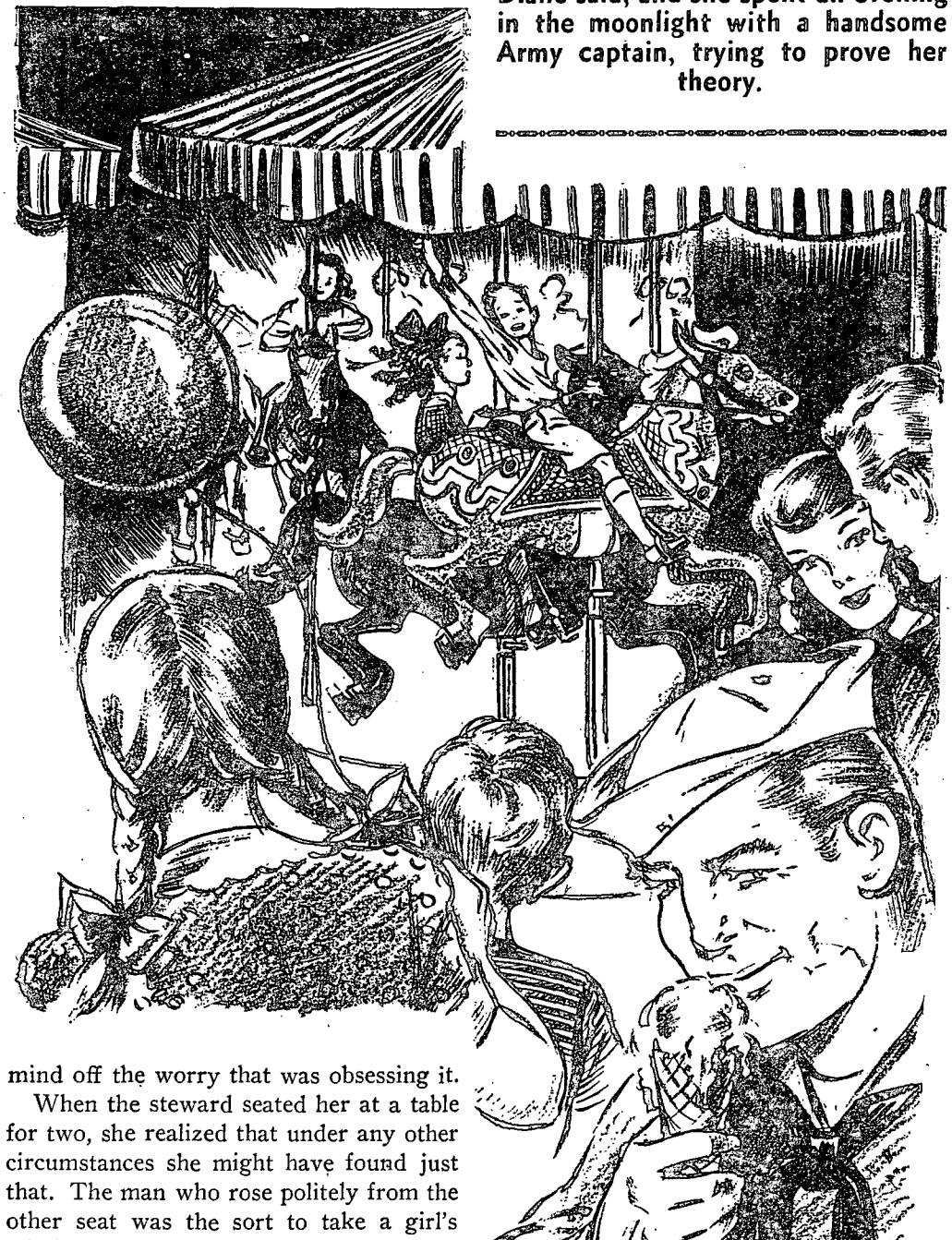
THE diner was crowded. In fact the whole train was packed to capacity. Diane knew she was lucky to get a reservation. Still she was irritated. She had wanted to fly. Her errand was one that called for a plane—a fast one.

She followed the steward through the swaying car. Not that she wanted to eat. She just needed something to take her

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

DREAMS

"Love at first sight is ridiculous," Diane said, and she spent an evening in the moonlight with a handsome Army captain, trying to prove her theory.



mind off the worry that was obsessing it.

When the steward seated her at a table for two, she realized that under any other circumstances she might have found just that. The man who rose politely from the other seat was the sort to take a girl's mind off a lot of things. Right now the sight of his uniform only added to her bitterness.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

She didn't care if he was tall and dark and beautifully bronzed. She didn't care if he had deep-set gray eyes and a gravely good looking mouth. He wore olive drab. That was enough. Of course all men in uniform weren't wolves, but a lot of them did make fools of silly vulnerable young blondes, persuaded them that marrying lads all set to go overseas was romantic and heavenly.

As she sat down the young man opposite her said:

"I hope you don't mind about the table. If there were other space, I'd let you have this to yourself. But I got on at Washington, just on a chance. Found I had to park myself here, and pretend I wanted dinner to be able to stay on the train."

Diane had the feeling that he too was worried about something. His nice eyes were harried. His mouth had a wry tenseness.

She said, "It's quite all right. All travel is hectic these days. I tried without success to get plane reservations."

He laughed ruefully. "So did I." Then he asked carefully, "I don't suppose that's sufficient to permit you to be my dinner guest?"

Diane stared at him. She had been right about olive drab, hadn't she? They used it as an excuse for anything. She supposed that boy in Florida had started out with a line exactly like this. The boy who was going overseas.

She let her eyes travel from the soldier's dark head down to the insignia on his lapel. It was one she didn't know, a laurel wreath with crossed sword and pen, although his captain's two bars were plain enough. But what outfit did he belong with? Well it didn't matter. She was still sick of uniforms. They made any sort of man into a hero, didn't they? Polly had wired, "Diane, he's so wonderful! We're getting married as soon as we can manage. Just two days for a honeymoon, then he will have to go. I will keep on at the shop. But, darling, it will be heaven while it lasts!"

The profligacy of words annoyed Diane's business mind. Their import tore at her heart. Polly, her nineteen-year-old sister, marrying some strange boy, impossible love-at-first-sight stuff. Being left to heartache, nights of fear, days of waiting.

She had to get there and stop it. Her boss had agreed with her. Polly would listen to her. She could see what the young flyer was like, at least. If he was a nice sweet boy, she would persuade them to wait. Make them realize that real love didn't come as fast as that. And Diane did want real love for Polly. If only she could have flown! This darned train was so slow that she might be too late.

SHE looked at the man opposite her. He was glancing impatiently at the watch on his wrist. He flushed. "I'm sorry. It has nothing to do with our dinner party, really it hasn't. It's just that even a fast train seems to crawl, when you're accustomed to plane travel."

Diane said, "I'd love to be your dinner guest. We seem to have so much impatience in common." Suddenly she was glad she was wearing a smart gray suit and softly ruffled white blouse.

The young man laughed. It seemed to change his whole face. She hadn't realized that there was a devil lurking in his grave gray eyes, or that his voice had those deep smoothly alluring undertones.

Well at least he knew how to order a dinner. Diane found she was hungry after all. Her worry faded a little too. This train's time was famously accurate. Surely Polly would obey her telegram to wait until it arrived.

She asked about the pen and the sword on the laurel wreath, and found it signified the Judge Advocate General's Department. Her host said, "Which means I'm

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

stuck in Washington for the duration, probably. You see I was a lawyer, before Pearl Harbor; the firm of Wickham, Reed, Nevins and Barton. I'm Barton—Jim, to my friends."

She said simply that she knew the firm. "I'm Diane Ward. I work for United Aircraft."

He eyed her chic smartness briefly. "Some executive's prized secretary, I'll bet."

He cocked an eyebrow in pretended awe when she mentioned the president. "I might have known it would be something like that. Did you say your name is Ward?" Maybe she should have heeded the odd expression of his mouth, but she was too busy avoiding the way his eyes were warming up. She just nodded absently, then found herself wanting to add, "Diane, to my friends." But she realized, just in time, that this dinner acquaintance was progressing a bit too fast.

She stiffened a little, and tried to remember her ideas about uniforms. She said, "I'm afraid we're lingering too long over our coffee. There are lots of passengers waiting."

He got up instantly. "I appreciate your eating with me. I'd expected to spend the time chewing my nails. You see I've an assignment ahead of me that I haven't the foggiest idea how to handle. And yet I'm in such a hurry to get at it that I'm practically nuts. If only you knew what it's been to have someone to talk to, someone attractive, to take my mind from my worries."

She said, "I've enjoyed our dinner a lot, too," and tried not to notice that he was holding her hand a bit too long, and that his fingers had a crazy magnetism. As she gently withdrew it, he said with an odd eagerness, "Look, it's too early to turn in. How about the observation platform? We'll probably be alone. Want to try it?"

Try being alone with him? She lifted her lashes. It would probably be a dangerous experiment, but why not? She wasn't a silly nineteen-year-old zany, like Polly. She could take uniforms or leave them alone. She had fended for herself among wolves for four years now, ever since she was eighteen. Tweed or uniforms were the same, as far as she personally was concerned. It was only when it came to Polly—

She looked at Captain James Barton and smiled. "Thanks, it would be nice."

HE STEADIED her through the long line of cars. There was a magnetism in his hands that could play tricks with a girl's blood-pressure. It made the sight of moonlight along the tracks behind them a little disconcerting. This man plus moonlight? She tried to shrug it off.

She said, "Funny, going to Florida in late summer. Everything's changed down there. A lot of the winter crowd are keeping their houses open for the benefit of the armed forces."

Jim Barton pulled two chairs close together, facing each other. He sat down and offered her a cigarette. He disregarded her comments on Florida.

He said, "I like these old-fashioned trains better than the streamliners. I like these platforms."

He snapped on his lighter and held it for her. He said, "A fellow would have to be awfully careful, not to burn your lashes."

His eyes were too close to hers, a little dangerous. Diane found herself wondering if Polly's boy had eyes like this. She laughed uncertainly, and put her head against the back of her chair.

They smoked for a while in silence. Jim talked about Washington, how the city had changed since the war.

"I'd like to show you the place some day. Maybe when you come back, you could stop off."

He clasped his hands between his knees,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

leaning forward to look at her. She said hastily that she would be going right through, that she would have to get back to New York, once her errand was done. She said she didn't want to talk about her errand, if he didn't mind, and he gave her one of those steady intent looks of his.

"To be quite honest, I'd rather talk about you anyway."

She drew back, taut, chilled. But now he was looking at her with an odd soberness. "Funny, isn't it, that two hours ago I didn't dream you existed, and yet I'm feeling now as if I'd known you always. No, wait! Please don't get angry. I'm just trying to explain that I've always been drastically opposed to the idea even of friendship at first sight, let alone love. Now I'm not so sure."

For a long minute, Diane stared at him. He was expressing her own thoughts so startlingly.

His clean-cut profile was fine and strong against the moonlight. His eyes met hers so steadily. There was a warm decent appeal about Jim, even though his eyes were on her lips now, tense and too plainly aware. They swept on over her face, telling her she was lovely and desirable. A pleasant little shiver zippered up her spine.

Then suddenly she wanted to laugh aloud. She was on her way to Florida to rescue her young sister from love at first sight, and here she sat letting a perfectly strange man step up the beat of her heart as no man ever had before. She bit her lip angrily. Of course that was nonsense. It was merely the age-old line men used to pass hours like this. Even if he kissed her, it wouldn't mean a thing. She flashed him an amused little smile. The way he drew back was like a slap in the face.

He took out more cigarettes. In the flare of the lighter, his mouth had a sardonic cynical twist. "I'm sorry," he said briefly. "It must have been the moonlight, and that loneliness out there." His shrugged shoulder indicated the swiftly passing landscape.

Then he added with a contrite little grin that completely undid her again, "But maybe you will stop off in Washington some day, long enough for us to get really acquainted. Who knows?"

After that they talked of impersonal things, but their chairs were still close together. There was still the aloneness of the night, and the crazy thing that throbbed between them in spite of their cool aloofness.

Suddenly, Diane got to her feet. "I must go in. I've got a tough job ahead of me when I get to Florida. Sitting in the moonlight with a dangerous lad from the Advocate General's office doesn't help a gal's morale."

Then her eyes went grave, and she put out her hand. "Seriously, Captain Barton, it's been nice being with you. I hope we do meet in Washington some day. And thanks again for a delicious dinner."

His hand closed over hers, warm, strong. "That goes double," he began. What else he might have been intending to say was cut off. The train stopped with a grinding of brakes and a jar that threw Diane against him violently.

For a second he held her, awareness in his eyes again, his mouth completely losing its hard lines. Then he said swiftly, "Sit here. Don't stir. I'll go forward and see what's up."

IT SEEMED ages that she sat there. The early evening moon was nearly gone. Darkness enveloped the sandy land. There was only the sound of crickets in the roadside grass, and a faint light in some far away cabin. Then a man came along beside the train, and went down the track to set a red flare glowing.

What did that mean? A real delay? She gripped her hands in a fury of impatient worry again. When Jim came back she caught his arm. "What is it,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

what's happened? Are we going to be late?"

He gave her a strange little grin. "I'm afraid we are, about ten hours or so. There's a freight wreck up ahead. We can't move until it's cleared."

"Ten hours? Oh no!"

He carefully lighted a cigarette, forgetting to offer her one this time. "Sure, I know. I'm not any better pleased about it than you are. But what to do? We seem to be miles from any station, although they tell me there's a little town, beyond those fields."

"Then let's go. Maybe we can get to a bus line. I tell you I've got to go on."

He smiled at her much as one smiles at an impatient child. But back of it, she felt an appraisal that had nothing to do with childishness.

"I guess you don't know much about this country around here. A town probably means a cluster of houses, a general store and a straggling street of negro cabins. But look, we could take a walk if you like. It might be better than sitting here all night."

"I don't intend to sit here all night. I'm having my berth made up."

"Oh, yes, I'd forgotten you were one of the fortunate ones. I'll be lonely, sitting here without you."

Something in his smooth undertones sounded like a dare. She thought, It will probably be terribly hot in that berth. Her watch said only nine o'clock.

She asked, "Where could we walk?"

"Out over that field."

"It's too dark."

He shook his head. "Not with those stars. Besides," he added on a queer low note, "there's nothing to be afraid of."

Crazily enough that made her mad. As if she thought there was!

She said, "All right, I'll go."

His cigarette made a bright arc onto the cinder-bed, as he stood up. "Have you any other clothes with you, heavier shoes and something warmer than this?"

He touched the white ruffled collar of her blouse. She drew back from the contact, and knew at once she had betrayed what his nearness had done to her.

He said, "Sorry," on an oddly gentle note. "I was merely thinking that such daintiness might be wrecked, out there in the mist."

She made her eyes meet his levelly. "I have slacks in my bag, also a pair of moccasins. I won't be a minute."

THE steps of one of the coaches were down. Even then she had to jump. Jim caught her easily, making no attempt to hold her. One of the passengers walking near the train called after them, "Better not go too far. Trains in this condition often start without notice."

But Jim just helped her over the fence. "I'll see that you don't get too far away."

His hand on her elbow guided her over the sandy stubble. There was a scent of pine, cool, misty. The sense of such utter aloneness as she never had experienced before. Involuntarily, she walked closer to Jim. He put his arm across her shoulders. Jim Barton's nearness was like something she had always known—which was absurd.

She laughed uneasily. "Maybe we'd better go back. Maybe that man was right."

But Jim had stopped, looking out across the field. Then he laughed suddenly. "Listen! Know what that is? There's only one sound like it."

"Jim Barton, it's a carrousel! But how could it be, away out here?"

"Some little travelling show, probably." His eyes dared her. The next second they were racing across the field. It was a carrousel all right, a sorry, cheaply painted affair that had evidently travelled far. Diane looked at Jim. The crowd parted to let them through.

Diane caught a brass ring and got a free ride. She put back her red head and

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

laughed into Jim's eyes. He bent from his careening horse and kissed the warm curve of her mouth. The crowd gave three cheers for the soldier and his girl.

After that, they sat on high stools at a pop counter and drank to each other. Diane asked, "Did you ever do this before?"

Jim's eyes met hers over his cigarette lighter, amused, queerly tender. "I was born in a little community like this."

She said, amazed, "And now Wickham, Reed, Nevins and Barton!" And thought of paneled offices and double telephones on each desk.

Jim said, "Maybe I shouldn't have told you. Not that I'm ashamed of it. Many a better man than I has come from that little place. A lot of them are fighting this war, giving all they have. But somehow with a girl like you—"

She stood in front of him, very still. "I was born in a little place up in the Green Mountains. That's in Vermont. My great-great-grandfather fought with Stark. I'm proud of my home town, too."

Very slowly, Jim Barton reached for her. Crazily, she let him, although she knew what he was going to do.

But she never had dreamed of a kiss like this. She went limp against his shoulder, a beautiful relaxed feeling, as if no trouble or worry in the world could ever touch her again. As if she had known that some day a man named Jim would kiss her this way, warm and tender and heavenly sweet.

There was flame holding them. The crowd had drifted away. They were as utterly alone as if this were their private world, a world no war or worry could touch. A world of first love come true.

Then suddenly she was out of his arms, furious with herself, but more at this tall bronzed soldier with his arms that had been so sure about her, with that kiss of his still blazing on her lips.

She beat her hands against him, her dark eyes stormy, her mouth a trembling scarlet line. "How did you dare? How was I such a fool as to let you? It's revolting. No man should kiss a girl like that unless he loves her. No girl should let him, unless she loves him."

"And so?" he questioned quietly.

Her voice shook as she said, "It couldn't be love. Not as soon as that. You said yourself you didn't believe in it, that you didn't believe even a real friendship could come that soon."

"I know I did. But that belief was formed before I met you. Now I know it's a lie. Listen, you little fool, I love you as deeply and truly as if I'd known you a thousand years. If that weren't true, I'd never have kissed you at all. I've never kissed a girl that way before. I never will again. You can believe it or not, though—"

His eyes were very deep, very earnest, looking at her. "Though I'd a lot rather you did believe it, Diane, darling."

She stamped her foot. "I won't believe it. I don't want to believe love comes like that. Oh, don't you see," she wailed on a broken little note, "I can't believe it, I can't possibly believe it! I've got reasons, very good reasons."

Jim Barton laughed, a queer choked laugh. "Angel, that doesn't make a damned bit of difference. Sure, I thought differently about it too. Now I know I'm wrong."

Diane said fiercely, "I still say it's silly. It's just part of this insane night, of that idiotic carrousel bringing back our childhood. Just part of being bored on that train. You'd have done the same with any other girl in like circumstances."

He met her accusing eyes gravely. "And you'd have done the same with any man?"

"Don't be childish. I'd never have acted this way with any man but you."

His mouth twisted. "Well at least that's something."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Then suddenly he lifted his head, listening. Across the field, muted by the distance and mist, came the long low hoot of a train whistle.

Diane felt her face go white. "They said ten hours!"

Jim grabbed her hand. "We've got to run for it. I've got more reason than ever now to get to Florida on that train."

"If I don't make it, I'll never forgive you!"

She never believed she could run like that. At the last she realized that Jim was more than half carrying her. Gosh he was strong! She could feel the way his heart raced, the quick evenness of his breath.

She whispered, "We were utterly crazy to go so far."

Jim said harshly, "Save your breath. If you can't make it, I'll have to leave you. I've got to get back aboard that train."

"You've got to!" Her breath left her. Jim really carried her the last few steps. There were still some passengers straggling aboard. Jim let them pass him. Then he bent his head, his eyes possessing Diane's. "Here's one for you to remember, darling. The last kiss I'll ever give you, until you've told me you love me. Until you've acknowledged before witnesses that love can come at first sight, and be the realest thing on earth."

Her mouth struggling against his, she said, "I'll never acknowledge it, to you or anyone else. I don't believe it."

But Jim kissed her just the same. Sharp and sweet and so beautifully, poignantly real. She felt her eyes fill with tears.

When he set her down on the platform of her car, she turned away from him. "Please let me go."

He looked down at her. "But only for a little while, my darling. Then we'll both stop being fools about love."

In the women's dressing room, she surveyed herself in the mirror. She had the place to herself.

She swallowed hard, remembering Jim's mouth, the aching tenderness of his eyes, the whole beautifully silly set up. No sir, that was one thing Polly never should guess about! Polly was going to be sensible about love. Polly was going to be sure that her big sister was right, that love came slowly and with dignity.

She looked at her reflection in the mirror. Soft red mouth blurred, hurt looking. Dark eyes wide, as if they had had a glimpse of heaven. A slim vulnerable girl in slacks.

But when Diane Ward walked into the diner for breakfast, every trace of such folly was gone. Even when the steward said, "I'm sorry, miss, but there's only one empty seat." She sat down opposite Captain James Barton, as if she never had seen him before.

She said, "Good morning. I hope you don't mind." And he replied politely that he didn't, not in the least. He sat there calmly as if he were quite unconscious of the lipstick on his collar.

After a minute, she said in a fierce little whisper, "There's a valet on the train, you know. Why didn't you go to him?"

He looked down at the offending smear. "Sorry, angel. Although you probably wouldn't understand, that's exhibit A for the case I'm trying this morning, or whatever time this uncertain train gets to Florida."

It got in on fair time, considering everything. Diane didn't see where Captain Barton went. If she never saw him again it would suit her swell.

She found a little hotel that hadn't been taken over by the Army, and engaged a room and bath.

She had a little time left before telephoning Polly. She took a bath with plenty of bubbly scented stuff, and got into cool white linen, very sheer with a pleated skirt, another ruffled blouse. She put a small white bonnet of starched lace back of her pompadour, looked to be sure

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

her stocking seams were straight, her white pumps immaculate. Then she started out. She had decided not to telephone Polly. Surprise would be better.

She found the shop easily. It had a sign, SOLDIER'S MENDING DONE. MINOR ALTERATIONS ON UNIFORMS. Polly had always sewed well: A Vermont grandmother had taught her.

A bell jangled over the door when Diane walked in, but before it stopped, she had halted abruptly not believing her eyes.

Polly sat at the sewing-machine, obviously putting last hasty stitches into a wedding dress. A boy with a second lieutenant's bar was laughingly pretending to help her. And swinging a long leg from a nearby table, Jim Barton was lighting one of his everlasting cigarettes.

HIS eyes met hers gravely over the lighter flame. "You're late. Court is already in session. And I'm telling you now that you haven't a leg to stand on. It's already been proven that you left a train last night, somewhere between Washington and the state of Florida. That you fell in love at first sight with a man you never had laid eyes on before. That you disgracefully rode a disreputable carrousel, and let said man kiss you. I ask leave to present Exhibit A."

He pointed dramatically to the lipstick on his collar. "It has also been proven that you therefore are not qualified to stop this marriage between Polly Ward and Donald Barton. And that I'm not either; although I got special leave to come down here and do it, because I didn't think a kid brother of mine should marry any girl he'd known so short a time. And because, up to last night, I was so sure war marriages were all wrong."

Diane found her voice. "Polly, what is all this? Has this impertinent soldier dared to tell you a lot of lies?"

Polly got up and came to put her arms around Diane. With a hard little sob, Diane melted against her. Funny, but right now Polly seemed the oldest and strongest. And it was crazy how much Donald Barton looked like Jim.

Donald came over now. Darn it, his voice was like Jim's too!

"I honestly couldn't help it, Diane. Polly's so little and sweet, and she mended my clothes so beautifully, and—Well if Jim isn't lying, and I've never known him to, maybe you can understand now how it is. A girl Jim loves—" He choked a little.

Diane lifted her lashes and looked at the two young faces so near her. Then she looked at Jim.

"How the heck can you expect me to win a case when I have the Judge Advocate General's Department against me?"

Jim got slowly to his feet. And somehow Polly and Donald disappeared. Jim said, "Let them go. We'll all get together at the church later."

Jim reached his arms to her, and she went into them. It was all mad, utterly insane. But it was so crazily beautiful. Diane couldn't find any words. But she didn't need them with Jim's lips on hers, with the tingle of his fingers pushing her immaculate hair awry. With Jim saying, "The minute you said your name was Ward, I guessed. The minute I first saw you, I knew I was wrong about the whole thing, because I'd found first love myself and was knocked all of a heap. I bribed the steward to put you at my table."

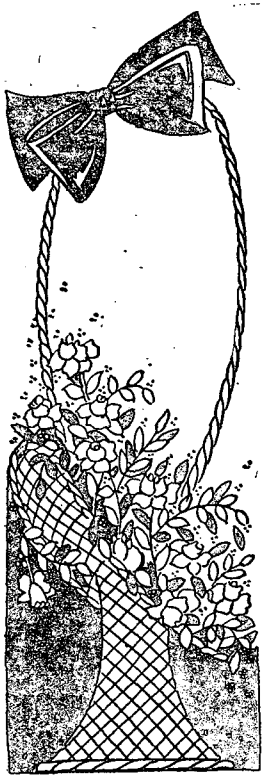
He tilted her chin, his eyes deep on hers. "War marriages aren't silly, angel. They're beautiful and terribly sweet. When I saw your Polly, when I saw Don's eyes— Oh, Diane, beloved, can't they teach us a lesson? Please, Diane."

His grave gray eyes couldn't possibly lie. Neither could her own winged heart.

"Say we were fools, Diane. Say you'll marry me as soon as we can manage it."

There wasn't any other answer, was there? "Yes, Jim," she said softly.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



Gift

The grandest gift that life can give
Is not love's shining start,
But all the dreams and memories
Locked safely in one's heart!

By Catherine E. Berry

Out of My Control

It doesn't do me any good
To call my heart my own,
For I have lost control of it,
As you quite well have known.

You whistle, and this renegade
Runs right away from me;
Indeed, you are the only one
That it minds willingly.

By Harriet A. Bradfield

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

NO PROOF NEEDED

By TUGAR DePASS

The scandal mongers weren't interested in the truth behind the headlines that ruined Lala's life.

"SO YOU'RE Lala Cameron?" The voice was cold, sardonic; the gray eyes in the lean dark face even more so. "Lieutenant Cameron of the WACS—well, well!"

"Yes, I'm Lala Cameron, Captain Stevens." Lala's own voice was smooth and clipped. It said in effect, 'and make something of it, if you dare.'

She realized abruptly that it had been almost two years since she had found it necessary to use that tone. That made it almost three years since Randy—

She cut that thought off. Slowly, deliberately she took a sip of the cocktail in her hand, then set the glass down on the low table beside her, without once shifting her gaze from that of her companion. Sherry colored eyes, fringed with short, thick bronze lashes the exact shade of her hair, looked straight into his.

"You sound as though my name meant something to you, Captain," she said. That direct approach had always worked in the past. People invariably retreated hastily, denying that her name meant anything to them. But it didn't work that way this time. The tall young officer with the close-cropped dark hair merely smiled down at her with cynical amusement, as though he knew exactly what she had been thinking.

"It does mean something special to me," he told her softly, but it was the softness of velvet over steel. "I'm afraid you didn't catch my first name when the colonel's wife introduced us a moment ago. I'm Kirk Stevens. Remember now? The man who flew all the way from South America to act as best man at your wedding. That wedding that never came off?"

"Oh, I see." Lala's heart lurched sickeningly. Kirk Stevens, Randy's best friend! "But we never met, did we?" she said a little wildly. "You came straight from the air field to the church, and—"

"And you never came at all," Kirk finished for her, as she stopped abruptly.

No, she hadn't gone to the church. Somehow she had got rid of the excited maid whom her mother ordered to stay with her until it was time for her father and herself to leave the old brownstone house. Then she had torn the priceless lace veil from her shoulder-length, coppery hair, letting it lay where it fell, a frothy mass on the floor of her bedroom. A moment later the shimmering satin wedding gown lay beside it, and she was frantically getting into a brown tweed suit.

Six hours later she had fitted a key into the door of the small Cape Cod cottage where she had spent her summers for as long as she could remember. She had stood there in the center of the cold living room, and drawn a deep, deep breath, and, gradually, her heart had ceased its wild pounding, and settled to a slow, even rhythm.

No one would think of looking for her here, not in the dead of winter! Not that anyone would be looking for her. Certainly not Randy. And she had left a note for her father and mother, saying she had just gone away for awhile, and they were not to worry. She would be home in a week or two.

She could stay here until she had

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Before I tell you whether or not I'll marry you," Lala said, "I've got to know how you feel about what happened three years ago."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

schooled herself to face the curious eyes, the unspoken questions, the scorn which she knew would be pointed at her after this thing she had done.

That's Lala Cameron, the girl who deserted Randy Richardson at the altar. One of those feather-brained, selfish glamour girls! And he is such a fine young man, too—worked himself up from office boy to a junior executive in her father's aircraft plant.

Oh, yes, that would be the sort of thing they would say! In her mind, Lala could hear them so clearly, could see the heads turned every time she walked into a night-club.

It wasn't until a week later that she found it was going to be a thousand times worse than she had thought—

SHE hadn't left the cottage that week, and since it was in a secluded spot more than a mile from the village, and set far back from the public road, she had had no visitors. Her three scanty meals a day had come from cans left over from the past summer, but the food was all gone, and she had to go into the village for supplies.

It was a good thing, she told herself, as she locked the door of the cottage. She knew very few of the villagers, but meeting even one of those whom she did know would be a test of how nearly ready she was to go home.

Even in this remote spot, the papers would have carried the story, of course. Besides being Creighton Cameron's daughter, she was something of a public figure in her own right. She had been voted number one debutante of the year; Hollywood had tried to interest her in making a picture; a visiting prince had given a statement to the papers saying he intended making her his princess—even though he hadn't asked her first. And then, finally, there had been what the papers called her 'story book romance' with Randy. Everyone read that story.

She turned into the big general store, her head high, intensely glad that the blustering February wind could account for her flaming cheeks. The moment she had dreaded was here now; old Mr. Dalton, the storekeeper, had known her since she was three.

But it was a strange young man who hurried forward to wait on her. Mr. Dalton was away on a fishing trip, he told her, and Lala was intensely relieved.

While her order was being filled, she strolled over to the magazine stand. And it was then she saw it!

Someone had left a week old New York paper thrown carelessly across the top of the stand, and staring out at her from it was Randy's boyishly handsome face. And beneath the picture were the incredible words—RANDOLPH RICHARDSON KILLED IN AUTO SMASH.

Afterward, Lala never could remember picking up the paper and reading the account which followed that headline. But she must have done so, for all the way back to the cottage the stark, incredible facts kept repeating themselves in her mind. Randy had left the church that day, and, 'evidently blinded by shock and grief,' had crashed his car into a truck two blocks away, and instantly been killed!

Blinded by shock and grief—more than any others, those were the words that seared into Lala's brain.

"Blinded by shock and grief," she heard herself saying aloud, when she was at last back in the cottage, crouched near the smoldering living room fire. And, suddenly, with no warning, she found herself laughing hysterically, laughing and laughing, until she could only gasp for breath. Randy, blinded by shock and grief because she hadn't come to the church to marry him!

With a final choked gasp, she fought back the mounting hysteria, and got swiftly to her feet. She knew now what she

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

must do. She must go home and face this with her head up. It had been a mistake, a horrible mistake, to run away in the first place.

SHE went back to New York that night. And she did learn to face it, face it with her chin held high and her eyes clear and steady. Even after she became aware that in the eyes of the public she was little better than a murderess. 'The socialite glamour girl who sent Randolph Richardson to his death' the tabloids called her.

She never talked about Randy, never mentioned what had happened, not even to her mother and father. They thought it was because she could not talk about it, and she was glad of that.

Ten months later, though, she was beginning to wonder if she could possibly go on this way. Then, suddenly, America was plunged into war, and the shock of it broke through the hard, brittle shell in which she had encased herself.

She threw herself wholeheartedly into war work of all kinds and the moment the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps was organized, she volunteered.

Now, almost two years later, it was the Women's Army Corps, and she was a lieutenant, just arrived at Fort Langston, California, to take over the command of the WAC detachment there. Colonel and Mrs. Evanston had her invited to their home this afternoon in order that she might meet some of her fellow officers.

Well, she had met them, dozens of them, and she had liked them all. She had even liked Captain Kirk Stevens for about half a minute.

"How did you ever happen to get into the WACS?" Kirk asked. "I shouldn't think that sort of thing would appeal to you in the least."

Lala's lips twisted into a wry little smile. "You mean you don't think it's the sort of thing that would appeal to a socialite glamour girl, don't you, Captain Stevens?" And, with a cool little nod, she turned and left him.

She found Colonel Evanston and little Mrs. Evanston, told them good-by, and pushed her way through the crowd toward the front door. Fort Langston was a huge place; it didn't make the least difference that a man named Kirk Stevens happened to be stationed here with her, she told herself firmly.

Just the same, a sudden wave of panic swept over her; for she knew it would make a difference if Kirk chose to rake up that old story and tell it around.

He wouldn't do a thing like that, though; it would be bordering on behavior unbecoming an officer and a gentleman. Instead, he probably would just ignore her entirely, which was certainly all right by her!

But Kirk evidently had no idea of doing any such thing. As she stepped through the front door out on to the wide, shady veranda she bumped into him. And she knew immediately from the quick change of expression on his lean dark face that he had been waiting there for her.

His first words confirmed that. "Talk about needles in haystacks!" he said. "I've been trying to catch up with you for the past ten minutes, and I finally decided the only thing to do was to wait out here for you."

"Yes?" Lala gave him a cool, level stare, but she couldn't help feeling a little puzzled, and excited. Why, he looked like a different person! His gray eyes seemed darker, warmer, and there was a touch of shyness about his smile.

"Well, first, I wanted to apologize," he said hastily. "I didn't realize I was being quite so rude until you walked out on me like that. But, you see—well, naturally, I've thought a lot about you, and meeting you unexpectedly like that—"

"Was a shock," Lala finished for him,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

as he paused. Evidently apologies weren't much in his line. She wasn't surprised; he was the arrogant, sure of himself type. Or was he? Certainly he looked neither arrogant nor sure of himself at the moment.

Before she stopped to think, Lala heard herself saying impulsively, "It's all right, Captain. I quite understand."

"But you don't!" he said, a trifle violently. Then, with a sudden grin, he added, "I don't understand myself. For three years I've almost hated you. I always pictured you in a slinky evening gown, a mane of copper hair falling about your shoulders, and too much make-up on your face. And here you turn up in a uniform, with a feather cut, and no make-up to speak of. Darn it, Lala Cameron, you've got me all mixed up! And I think it's up to you to help me straighten myself out again."

"But how?" Lala said. He was certainly a most surprising young man! She never had met anyone quite like him. And she couldn't help liking his frankness. At least, he was being honest with her.

"By letting me get to know you better," he told her calmly, "so that I can go back to hating you, or—" He paused deliberately, his eyes holding hers. "Or go on to liking you, liking you, maybe, more than will be good for me."

Lala tried to look away, and couldn't. Go on to liking her! If only he would! Kirk, Randy's best friend. It would be the most wonderful thing that had happened to her in three years.

TWO weeks later she still could scarcely believe it had really happened, although from their very first date they had clicked beautifully. They danced together as though their steps had been cut from the same pattern; they both liked Hemingway, James Hilton and Thomas Wolfe. And best of all, Lala thought, they could talk or not talk, it didn't make the least difference; even their silences were deep and warm and friendly.

It was during one of those silences, as they were driving back toward the fort after a long, lazy Sunday afternoon on the beach at La Jolla, that Kirk said abruptly, "I warned you, remember?"

"Warned me?" Lala glanced up at him, one winged, dark brow raised a little.

He swung the car abruptly into a side road, and drew up beneath the gnarled branches of a wind-swept old oak. Then he turned and looked down at her, his lips twisted into a little half smile, but his eyes were serious.

"That I might go on to liking you too much," he said softly. "It's gone far beyond liking. Oh, Lala, Lala, you must know, you must have guessed! I love you, darling, love you more than I ever dreamed it was possible for a man to love a girl." And, with a choked little sound, his arms closed about her, and his lips were hard against hers.

It seemed to Lala that the world suddenly stood still; there was no sound, no movement, nothing save the wonder of Kirk's arms holding her close, the glory of Kirk's lips claiming hers. Even the birds in the thick branches above them seemed to cease their twittering for the breathless moment that kiss lasted. Or perhaps it was just that she could not hear them for the tumult of her own heart.

Then Kirk whispered against her cheek, "Tell me you feel the same, Lala. Tell me you love me, darling. Love me enough to marry me right away. We may have so little time together."

Marry? Abruptly, the world came to life for Lala. Slowly, she pulled herself out of Kirk's arms, and looked at him. The bright California sun was hot on the back of her uniform blouse, but she suddenly felt cold and frightened.

"I do love you, Kirk, more than I ever thought it was possible for a girl to love a man," she said simply. "But there's

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

something we'll have to talk about first, before I tell you whether or not I'll marry you. I've got to know how you feel about what happened three years ago."

"No!" His voice was harsh. "Let the past stay buried, Lala. What happened three years ago has nothing to do with us. The present is ours, darling, the present and the future. That's all we need."

And then he kissed her again, long and hard, and Lala clung to him. Oh, surely, he was right, her heart cried. The past was dead and buried. It was only the present and the future that counted.

THEY were to be married two weeks later on a Sunday evening. Mrs. Evanston, the colonel's wife, had insisted that the wedding be at her home, and had taken all the arrangements into her capable hands. Lala was glad of that, for she was living these days in a rosy cloud of happiness, and doubted if she could have come down to earth long enough to discuss even such romantic things as wedding flowers and music.

Automatically, she performed her duties as commanding officer of the Fort Langston WACS, thinking always forward to the few brief hours she could spend with Kirk. For it was only then could she fully believe in the miracle that had happened to her.

And if Kirk sometimes seemed a little strange when he was with her, it was just because he was working so hard, she told herself firmly. The veil, which seemed to drop over his eyes at times, as though he didn't want her to know what he was thinking, was just a figment of her imagination.

You ought to be ashamed of yourself, she told herself more than once. You've just got a fine case of pre-wedding jitters. Remember how nervous you were three years ago?

But she backed hastily away from that thought. She mustn't forget that three years ago was the dead past. Kirk had told her so. And he wouldn't say a thing like that if he didn't trust her, didn't believe in her completely, would he? And it was wonderful that Kirk, who had been Randy's best friend, did trust and believe in her!

Lala always felt a little humble when she thought about that, and she was thinking about it her wedding night, as she sat before the dressing table in Mrs. Evanston's guest room, running a comb through her short, gleaming curls. How glad she was that there was no white satin gown and priceless veil to remind her of that other night—just this trim little uniform which she had learned to love, and of which she was so proud.

Not that she was afraid to be reminded. Nothing could ever hurt her again, not with the magic of Kirk's love wrapped about her.

Kirk? Her thoughts broke off abruptly, as her eyes fell on the little enamel clock on the dresser. Why, it was five minutes of eight, and the wedding was to be at eight! Surely, Kirk had already arrived? But it was odd that Mrs. Evanston had not come to tell her so, as she had promised.

She tilted her head, listening to the hum of voices from the living room. Then, abruptly, she stood up and crossed swiftly to the door. After all, it was to be a very informal affair, just Colonel and Mrs. Evanston, a few of Kirk's friends, and her own friends from the Corps. Kirk was probably out there with them, and no one had realized the time.

Only he wasn't! One swift glance told Lala that. What a silly way for her heart to behave, just because Kirk was a few minutes late!

"Hello, everybody!" she said brightly. "Any reason why I have to stay in there all by my lonesome and let you folks have all the fun?"

"None at all, none at all!" Colonel

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Evanston told her in his bluff, hearty voice. And with typical tactlessness, added, "We were just wondering what could be keeping that young man of yours."

"Oh, he'll be along in a moment." Lala shrugged lightly, as she sat down on the couch beside Mrs. Evanston.

But the moment stretched into an hour, two hours. The conversation spurted and died, and spurted and died again over and over. No one was looking at Lala, and yet she felt as though every eye in the room were upon her. She kept her own fixed on Mrs. Evanston's round little face, and nodded and smiled, and didn't hear a word that was said.

But, abruptly, she could stand it no longer. Suddenly she rose and quickly walked from the room out onto the side terrace.

There in the darkness, her hands clenched into tight little fists at her side, she faced the truth. He wasn't coming. Kirk wasn't coming!

OH, WHAT a stupid little fool she had been to ignore that first meeting of theirs. His eyes, his words, his every action had told her then what he really thought of her. All that came after had been an act, a clever, cruel act, to lead up to this moment. He was paying off Randy's score.

Tears welled up in her eyes, and spilled over down her cheeks, and she scrubbed at them furiously with her fists. She couldn't afford tears now; she had to go back into that room with her chin up, her eyes clear, and tell the people waiting there that the wedding was off, that she wasn't marrying Kirk tonight or ever.

But first she would go into the guest room, thank heaven it, too, opened upon this terrace, and somehow fight down the enormous lump in her throat.

She turned, but before she could move quick steps sounded on the flagstones behind her, and two strong hands were gripping her shoulders, swinging her around. And Kirk stood there looking down at her, his face taut with an emotion she could not understand, a little muscle twitching at the corner of his mouth.

"There's something I've got to tell you, Lala," he said, his voice husky. "I—"

"Never mind, Kirk," Lala cut him off, her own voice dull and lifeless. So he hadn't been able to go through with it as he had planned. He was too much of the little gentleman, probably! Probably, too, he was going to be very, very noble and offer to marry her anyway. Like a person in a trance, she went on in that dull, lifeless voice. "It was all an act, wasn't it? You never loved me, never loved me at all. You meant to leave me waiting at the church, the way Randy waited three years ago. Only—" She gave a short, hysterical little laugh. "Only this isn't a church, is it?"

"You little idiot!" He was suddenly shaking her furiously. "Just because I'm late, you dream up a thing like that!" The shaking stopped, but his fingers still bit into her shoulders, as he glared down at her. Then, abruptly, his face softened, and his voice was infinitely tender as he went on. "Darling, I was late tonight because I was given special detail. And while I was out, I did a lot of thinking. For the first time since I met you, I forced myself to think about what happened three years ago. You must have realized that I've been avoiding doing that all along. But tonight I knew I couldn't avoid it any longer, knew I had to think it through and decide once and for all whether I still, deep down in my heart, condemned you for what happened then."

"And?" Lala prompted desperately as he paused.

"And, oh, my darling, I found that there was nothing there *for* me to face, nothing at all. I knew that whatever your reasons for not going to the church that day, they were good reasons. You being you,

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

they had to be. I'm sure of that, Lala."

FOR a long, long moment, Lala looked up at him, then, with a choked little cry of happiness, she buried her face against his shoulder. Kirk held her close, his cheek hard against her hair. "And now," he whispered, "shall we go in and tell our friends that we are ready?"

"Maybe the groom is—" Lala smiled mistily up at him. "But the bride needs to do a little repair job on her face. You go ahead in, I'll join you in just a moment." And she turned and ran lightly toward the guest room.

But she did not go at once to the dressing table. Instead she opened the little overnight bag she had brought with her, and took out a small leather box in which she kept a few pieces of jewelry and one or two keepsakes. Among the latter was an ordinary sheet of note paper, folded once, and yellowed about the edges.

For a brief moment Lala held that folded piece of paper in her hand, staring down at it, then, slowly, she unfolded it and began to read. It was the note which Randy had sent to her just an hour before the time set for their wedding, the note which would have exonerated her completely, had she cared to make it public. But she had never been able to bring herself to do that. She had loved Randy, or thought she loved him, at least, and he was dead. Better for her, the living, to take the blame for what had happened.

She scarcely needed to look at the flowing script, for the words had been engraved on her heart for three long years—

My dear Lala:

There's only one way for me to say it quickly and get it over. I can't go through with our wedding. There's someone else, someone I've loved for a long time. I thought I could forget her, because marrying you would have meant getting to the top of the ladder in one jump for me. But I can't do it.

So don't come to the church, Lala —at least that much I can do for you. Let you jilt me,

Randy.

With a little sigh, Lala crumpled the note, dropped it into a metal ash tray on the bedside table, and struck a match to it. She had packed it with her honeymoon things because she had thought that sometime during those first wonderful days together she would show it to Kirk. But she knew now that it was much better this way. Love, real love, such as Kirk felt for her, did not have to be bolstered by proof.

When the last tiny curl of smoke had died away, Lala turned and walked swiftly toward the living room door.

HIT HITLER AND HIROHITO

HARDER—HARDER—HARDER!

BUY WAR BONDS

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A REASONABLE

By MARGERY WOODS

"You know, Captain Andrews," Felice remarked, "my brother didn't mention that you were married."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

FACSIMILE OF LOVE

Jinny had to borrow another woman's husband and family to make Keith see her as a grown-up woman.

JINNY MOFFATT and Lieutenant Keith Norvall were walking down Madison Avenue, lovely, sane Madison Avenue. Only people like herself, Jinny thought, who had known the dreadfulness of occupied Europe could really appreciate New York.

And with her, like a dream come true, was Keith, tall, gray-eyed and almost impossibly handsome. Save that he was now in uniform three years had changed Keith very little. He was still clever, fascinating and sophisticated. Too darned sophisticated, Jinny thought, but can a girl help

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the waywardness of her foolish heart?

She had last seen him on the Riviera before the invasion of France. An American attaché, he had been ordered home, and was taking one last continental vacation.

As he steered Jinny across the street Keith's mind was on those days. "I wonder what became of Lisa?" he said.

"I haven't an idea," Jinny answered, her hopes taking a sudden nose dive. Lisa had been only one of the lovely sophisticates Keith had known on the Riviera. But their friendship had been a casual thing because like most of the others she had a husband somewhere.

"Those were the days," he sighed and although he glanced at Jinny his eyes were filled with old memories.

I just don't register, she thought bitterly. I've spent this entire day making myself glamorous for him and I might as well be in gingham and pigtails.

Her black suit with its frou frou of ruffles and the black dot of a hat which perched so jauntily on her honey-gold hair, she had bought because of Keith. Over Martinis at the Ritz, Jinny had kidded herself into believing that he was impressed. Now she faced the truth. Not once this afternoon had he looked at her as he used to look at Lisa.

Keith exclaimed, figuring back, "You must have been in unoccupied France for more than two years. Why in heck didn't you come home?"

"My aunt was ill and depended on me so that I just couldn't leave her. She was French, you know, and only my aunt by marriage. But she sent for me after Father died and treated me like her own child."

"All very commendable," Keith admitted dryly. "But, someday, my sweet little sentimentalist, you're going to find out that Jinny Moffatt should come first."

"Am I?" she asked, giving him a sidewise glance under thick, brown lashes. Her eyes, too, were brown, with flecks of gold.

"And you were in Lisbon," he went on, "for at least a year. Did it take you all that time to get passage?"

"Uh-huh!" He would only think her foolish if she confessed to giving up her place on three different boats because someone else needed it more than she did.

"Have dinner with me," Keith suggested. "We'll go to Twenty-one, just the two of us."

"Sounds like fun," she said, trying to sound casual. Fun! It sounded like heaven. Yet Jinny's spirits were in a second nose dive. For she had put off telling him about Dibs. And he *would* think she was crazy, halfway adopting a Russian-American baby. He would think even crazier the pact she had made with Dibs' father who, after travelling with the baby for months by way of Persia and Africa, had finally checked in at Jinny's hotel in Lisbon.

FOR a moment Madison Avenue and even the dark handsomeness of Keith Norvall faded from Jinny's vision. Again she sat in her small hotel room while Eric Andrews strode up and down, ruffling his red hair with irritated fingers. "I don't want to wait around here, Jinny. I don't want to go home at all. If it weren't for Dibs I'd head for England and get into the American Air Force. But even if I got someone to see her across I haven't a single relative who could be trusted to care for her. I'm in a terrible fix."

"Adorable!" Jinny murmured, speaking to Dibs, who sat on her lap, struggling to put her pink toes into her equally pink mouth.

Eric had stopped his pacing to gaze at them, golden-haired Jinny and tow-haired Dibs. "Wait!" he exclaimed. "I have an idea. Suppose you take Dibs for the duration while I concentrate on bombing hell out of the Germans?"

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Jinny had looked up at him, her eyes warm and very sweet. "Would you trust me, Eric?"

"Who wouldn't trust you, Jinny Moffatt? You're always helping people out of trouble. And, Lord, how I love you for it."

Not that he had meant real love. Eric's heart was buried with his young wife, Elizabeth, who had died when Dibs was born. She had been half American, half Russian, and, dying, she had made Eric promise to take the baby home at once.

"Look here!" Keith exclaimed, taking Jinny's arm. "You aren't even listening to me. Where were you, anyway?"

"In Lisbon. Oh, Keith! It is wonderful to be here."

Five minutes later, they were mounting the steps of a narrow house with a trim white door. "Isn't this rather large," Keith asked, "for one small girl?"

"It's our family home. Since Father's death I've had it rented. But it happens right now to be vacant so I took over." She started to explain about Dibs. But, as the white door swung open and they stepped into the foyer, the baby made her own presence known.

"Ji-ji!" she cried, toddling through the dining room in her blue seersucker sleepers. "Ji-ji! Ji-ji!" She fell, picked herself up and with the nose-wrinkling smile which was one of her many charms hurled herself upon Jinny.

As always, Jinny melted with tenderness and, forgetting her organdie jabot, swung the baby into her arms. "This is Dibs," she explained to Keith, "short for Elizabeth. I hadn't got round to telling you about her."

"But, you mean—"

His expression was so ludicrous that laughter almost overcame her. "Keith!" she gasped. "You look so funny."

"Ji-ji!" Dibs shouted, bouncing up and down while she buried her hands in the organdie.

"Dibs' father," Jinny said, "is Eric Andrews. He's an American but he worked for the International Telephone Company and has been abroad for several years. Right now, he's in London with the American Air Force. I met him . . . Dibs!" She broke off, endeavoring to release the organdie from the baby's fingers. "You little rapscallion, you."

"I can't believe it," Keith exclaimed. "Imagine you not only married but with a baby! Though I might have known, Jinny, that a lovely girl like you would not stay single for long. You've changed, grown so much lovelier."

Jinny started to explain but her voice died on a little gasp of pure happiness. For Keith was finally gazing at her the way he had gazed at Lisa, as if there weren't another girl in the whole world. Breathlessly, she called the maid to come for Dibs. Such a foolish mistake. She would explain right away.

"Look!" Keith said to the maid. "While Mrs. Andrews is dressing could you mix us a couple of cocktails? Or, better yet, I'll mix them."

"Yes, sir," the maid answered, looking dazed. And, bearing Dibs away, she muttered, "Andrews? Andrews?"

Now even the maid thought she was married. "Keith!" Jinny began, "You don't understand about Dibs and Eric."

But he wasn't listening. "You poor sweet," he said, drawing her toward him. "You have been through a devil of a lot. You need someone to look after you. And from now on, darling, I intend to make you my war work."

UPSTAIRS, Jinny looked at herself dazedly. "You didn't tell him," she accused. "You purposely misled him." She knew it wasn't right, and yet she couldn't be sorry, not when she remembered the new look in Keith's eyes. He was really seeing her for the first time. This was her chance to make Keith really

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tumble for her, and when the evening was over she would tell him the truth.

From the closet she took scarlet evening slippers and a white jersey gown with a red cummerbund. This, too, she had bought in the morning's orgy of shopping.

As always, Twenty-one was elegant and sophisticated. But Keith Norvall had eyes only for a certain very lovely blonde across the table from him.

"I can't get over the change in you, Jinny. Everything about you is different. Tell me about Eric Andrews. I suppose you met him at your aunt's villa." As she made no answer he took it for granted, saying regretfully, "And to think that I saw you first. Although you were only a child I should have known that those brown eyes and that honey-colored hair would add up some day to pure loveliness."

"That's a very nice line, Keith."

"It isn't a line, Jinny."

If only it weren't, and he did really want her. A couple he knew dropped by the table and Jinny heard herself being introduced as "Mrs. Andrews." She was getting in deeper and deeper, but champagne cocktails made her feel that it would come out all right and nothing must spoil this lovely evening. From Twenty-one they went to the Stork Club, walking hand in hand up dimmed-out Fifth Avenue.

Finally Jinny awoke from bliss to discover that it was one o'clock and to remember that Dibs had been left with a very new maid. Keith took her home in a horse-drawn cab. He drew her close and kissed her, not too long or too hard, as if this were a promise of more complete kisses in the future.

"Precious Jinny!" he said. "Save tomorrow for me, and tomorrow and tomorrow." They were stopping at her own steps, and she hadn't explained about Dibs. She knew she must, but if she shattered this magic moment she might never see Keith again.

As Jinny closed the door behind her, a movement in the drawing room tightened every muscle with fright. "Jinny!" a man's voice inquired, "is that you?"

"Eric!" she cried, watching his long body unfold sleepily from a big chair in the drawing room. "Eric Andrews! You frightened me to death."

"I'm sorry," he apologised, running one hand over his tumbled, coppery hair. "I must have gone to sleep, Jinny, waiting for you."

"When did you get in? Oh, Eric, you're terribly thin!"

"Arrived by bomber late this afternoon. I am run down. That's why they sent me home. I've been in the hospital."

"Hospital! Were you wounded?"

"Just some flak in my right arm. It's all right now and that one night was worth the trouble it's caused me. We bombed the very hell out of Berlin." Glancing at the clock, he added, "I let your maid go home. By the way, why did she call you Mrs. Andrews?"

"Did she?" Jinny asked, dropping aside her wrap and curling up in a corner of the sofa. Desperately she groped for a feasible explanation, and, finding none, blurted out the truth. Jinny had got confidential one night in Lisbon, and Eric knew all about Keith.

As she talked the line of Eric's jaw hardened and his eyes grew scornful. "What a swell lad!" he exploded. "Miss Jinny Moffat made no impression, but when he thought you belonged to another man. . . ."

"Oh, Eric! It wasn't that. Keith has always considered me just a child. Thinking I was married gave him such a jolt that for the first time he really looked at me. I'll telephone him in the morning and explain that it was only a rib. I intended to do it anyway."

Eric walked impatiently to the window and back again. "And what a rib!" he exclaimed, looking down at her. "Has it

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

occurred to you, Jinny, that the joke is going to be very much on you?"

"What do you mean?"

"That after this boner you've pulled you won't have a chance in a million with Keith Norvall. When he finds out what a fool you've made of him, he won't ever want to see you again."

It was true! She had been out of her mind to lead Keith on the way she did. But she wouldn't give him up! There must be something she could do.

Her voice was low and shaky. "Eric," she said, "what shall I do? I couldn't bear to lose Keith now."

She couldn't see Eric's face. His back was toward her, and he was drumming impatiently on the window pane. "There's only one way out," he said abruptly, "you'll have to go on being Mrs. Eric Andrews. Then pretend to get a divorce and marry Keith. After that tell him the truth. He'll have to forgive you if you're already married."

"Don't be crazy, Eric!"

"I don't mind," he said, turning around with the lop-sided grin which made his strong-jawed face so attractive. "Anything to oblige a lady."

She started to protest, but Eric cut her off abruptly. "Please don't say anything more, Jinny. It's all right. You want the lad, and I'll help you get him, so let's leave it at that. I'll go in a minute, but first I want to say good night to Dibs."

He left the room without a backward glance and Jinny watched him slowly mount the stairs. In a moment she followed him.

The door of the nursery was open, but Jinny stood in the hallway watching Eric, her heart a big, hurting lump in her breast. He was standing by the crib, and as he watched he leaned over and gently touched Dibs' halo of pale gold hair.

Suddenly Jinny's worry over Keith was gone, her throat choked with tears. Poor Eric, who hadn't a ghost of a home and couldn't even be with his baby now that his wife was gone, had to solve all of her problems, too. Well, she wasn't going to implicate him any further in her sorry love affair. Tomorrow she would straighten out everything and Eric would be free to enjoy the rest of his leave with his baby daughter.

THE next morning Eric arrived in time for breakfast. When Ruby finished fussing over him and they were alone, he said, "I've been thinking things over, Jinny, and I decided that you and I should give a dinner."

"Dinner?"

"Yes. Let's make it tonight at El Morocco. With that striped furniture and those cock-eyed lights you can't tell whether you're tight or sober. We'll ask Keith and some other people. It will be a sort of gesture."

Jinny began to protest, but the telephone rang and cut her short. It was Keith. "Jinny!" he exclaimed. "An Eric Andrews, a flyer, got in yesterday from England. Is he your husband?"

"Yes. I mean it's the same Eric Andrews. I mean—Oh, how did you know?" she asked distractedly.

"The morning paper," Keith explained. "As his wife and child weren't mentioned, I couldn't be sure. I'm glad he's safe and all that. But it is tough, having him barge in, when I've just found you again."

Here was her chance to explain the whole mess. Jinny took a deep breath and got ready, but suddenly Eric appeared at her elbow. "Friend of yours?" he inquired loudly. "Tell him about the dinner, darling."

"Oh," Keith said at the other end of the wire. "So he's there now."

"I'll call you back," Jinny answered dizzily. Replacing the telephone in its cradle, she faced Eric.

He met her glance with teasing blue eyes and that lopsided grin. "Did I do

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the right thing, my pet?" he asked teasingly. "You have me now, for better though not for worse. There's always Reno, you know."

Suddenly Jinny realized that she wasn't imposing on Eric at all. He was very much amused and was treating the situation like a three ring circus.

So Captain and Mrs. Eric Andrews gave a party at El Morocco. For the occasion Jinny bought apricot lace with a long-sleeved jacket. And Eric's camellias were at her shoulder.

Eric had invited a Mrs. Jenkins and her husband, old friends of his, and also a tall, dark gypsy of a girl named Felice, whose brother, a flyer in England, had asked Eric to get in touch with her.

"You know, Captain Andrews," Felice remarked. "Tom didn't mention that you were married."

"We hadn't heard either," Mrs. Jenkins observed. "But then, Eric has been away for almost four years. Where did you meet him, Mrs. Andrews? In Russia?"

"Oh, no," Jinny answered. "It was unoccupied France. I was living there with a French aunt of mine."

"She was gathering mushrooms," Eric added. "I'll never forget how pretty she looked."

"Mushrooms?" Felice asked.

"For soup," Eric explained gravely. "On her aunt's estate near Cannes."

"And you have a baby," Mrs. Jenkins enthused. "Does she look like you, Eric?"

"No," Keith interrupted crossly. "Like her mother."

"Our rumba," Eric observed hastily, pulling Jinny from her chair.

"MUSHROOMS!" she exclaimed furiously as they swung out on the dance floor. "You are enjoying this unholy mess, aren't you, Eric?"

"You want to be Mrs. Keith Norvall, don't you, my sweet little dimwit? I'm just trying to keep you from making things more of a mess than they are. I had to change the subject before you got into more trouble. Don't forget you're going to have to tell the truth sooner or later, so go easy now. Then he'll have less to forgive."

What he said made sense, but somehow Jinny wasn't too sure that Eric was trying to be helpful.

"Know what?" Eric asked. "I believe the handsome lieutenant is hard hit this time. He was looking murder at me, and jealousy is a good sign."

"What if he is hard hit? I'm *married* now."

"A six-week vacation in Reno, and you can be divorced just like pulling rabbits from a hat. Before I go back to England I'll make some other arrangement for Dibs."

"You mean, take her away from me?"

"Of course. The lieutenant wouldn't want her."

"No!" Jinny exclaimed, feeling cold to her very bones.

"You've done your part," Eric said gently. "And I appreciate it. You couldn't have been more wonderful to Dibs if she were your own child." Drawing her close, he brushed his lips across her forehead. "You make a sweet armful," he said with a husky, little catch in his voice.

She started to push away but his arms were very strong and oddly comforting. Unconsciously she closed her eyes and let her hand slide up to the back of his collar. "You were never lovelier," Eric hummed in a rich baritone while little tendrils of emotion danced through her.

A hand tapped Jinny's shoulder. "Mind if I cut in?" Keith inquired and danced her away. His dark eyes were furious, his voice taut as he exclaimed, "Seeing you in that man's arms does something to me, Jinny. You're not in love with him. You can't be!"

"Why can't I?"

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Because you've got under my skin. I've never really been serious about any girl since I was a Senior in college. But I could be serious about you."

"Such a charming line, Lieutenant."

"This time, Jinny, it isn't a line. And that worries me."

WHEN the evening was finally over and they had closed the white door behind them, Eric turned to remove Jinny's wrap. "Where's the lieutenant stationed, my pet?"

"Here in New York. He has something to do with foreign relations."

"You know," Eric said thoughtfully, "I think the lad is really going for you. And why not? You're beautiful, Jinny."

The warmth in his eyes ran through her like wine. Trembling a little, she started for the stairs. Eric followed her to the nursery, to say good night to Dibs before leaving.

Jinny bent down over the crib to kiss one flushed cheek. "Isn't she precious?" she whispered.

He nodded, sliding his arm around her shoulders. For a moment she felt very close to him, as if they were really married, and Dibs was her child as well as his. Then, almost resentfully, she remembered Elizabeth, his wife.

Out in the hall, Jinny said through a lump in her throat, "Eric, I want to keep Dibs for the duration."

"Not if you marry the Lieutenant, Jinny. I don't want my child resented by any man."

"He'd have to love her, Eric. Everyone does."

"Not Keith Norvall, I'm afraid. And look, Jinny, you must give up Dibs sooner or later. So why not now?" Seeing her eyes darken with pain, he took her shoulders gently in his strong, brown fingers. "I'm sorry, my dear. But you'll have children of your own—maybe."

"Why, maybe?" she asked.

"You'll have to admit, Jinny, that your lieutenant is scarcely the domestic type."

"Keith," she said, trying to convince herself, "is less cynical than you imagine. And if he weren't I would still have to love him. You know how it is, Eric. You've been that way, yourself."

"Yes, I know how it is." He drew her close, brushing her lips with his. "Good night, Jinny."

The next day was Sunday and Keith telephoned around noon, to be asked over for cocktails. He and Jinny sat in the garden, with Dibs playing in her sand box. "Adorable!" Jinny said, kissing the baby as she brought over a fistful of wet sand and put it on her lap.

"*You're* adorable!" Keith murmured and she gave him a swift, smiling glance under thick brown lashes. "Where's Captain Andrews?" Keith asked.

"Off somewhere. And he has a telegram in there from the War Department. I hope it isn't too important." Just then, she heard Eric inside, apparently on the telephone.

He came out with the telegram in his hand and shook his head when Jinny offered to mix him a rum Collins. "Haven't time. I'm ordered to Washington, and just managed to get a reservation on a train leaving at six. Keep Jinny amused while I'm away, will you, Lieutenant?"

"How long will it be?" Jinny asked.

"Three or four days," Eric answered, tossing an ecstatic Dibs in the air before he went indoors to pack.

Keith pulled his well-knit body from a wicker lounging chair. "I'll be back, Jinny, to take you out to dinner."

"Grand, Keith."

JINNY went back to the hotel with Eric to help him pack. While Eric emptied drawers, Jinny packed things into the same bag, strewn with foreign labels, which Eric had had in Lisbon.

"They want me," he said over his shoul-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

der, "to do some instructing before I get back. But I'll spike that if I can. My job is in England."

"Perhaps it isn't, Eric. Perhaps you could do just as much good over here for a while."

"You of all people should *want* me in England," he said curtly. "You've seen the Nazis at work. Look, Jinny. Do you want to be really domestic and sew on this button?"

With mixed feelings she sewed the button. It was such a nice, safe feeling to know that Eric was over here, away from all the danger and death.

When they went back to the house with the packed bag, Dibs was neglecting her supper to pound her high chair tray with a spoon.

"Be a good girl," Eric said, kissing her. As he drew Jinny toward him he added, "And that goes for you, too, young lady."

"I'd rather have fun," she teased.

"What kind of fun?" His lips were close to hers. "Like this?" And he kissed her in a hard and hungry fashion with his arms almost taking her breath away.

With her cheeks aflame, her blood a mad, bewildered tempest, Jinny looked up at him. "Is that fun?"

"For me it is," he returned, giving her his lopsided smile.

Just a crazy flyer, she thought, taking his kisses where he found them. Yet, with the front door thudding behind him, she felt left out and lonely. Had his wife loved him very much? Eric must have made an amusing husband.

On Monday, Keith sent Jinny long-stemmed yellow roses, in addition to a corsage of gardenias. They had dinner at the Rainbow Room, dancing until midnight. A perfect evening, she told herself afterward. She adored the way Keith kissed her, sort of holding himself in.

On Tuesday, Keith sent yellow orchids and they dined at Twenty-one, doing several night-spots later. Afterward he came in the house with her, took off her white evening cape and kissed her again, longer, a little harder. "Loveliest," he asked, "why do I have to leave you, ever?"

Wednesday evening, Keith had to work. But he called for Jinny around ten and they danced at the Copacabana, with Keith holding her as if she were very precious. She wore fuchsia satin, that night, and his white orchids were at her shoulder. There was something special in the air, something which almost frightened her. She wasn't surprised when Keith called a horse-drawn cab and ordered the driver to go through the park.

"Jinny," Keith said, drawing her into his arms. "We must decide about us."

"About us?"

"I want to marry you, Jinny. I want it so much that I hardly know how to say it. Believe it or not, this is the first time I've proposed to a girl since I left college. I know how you feel, darling; that you don't want to let Eric down when he's fighting for his country. But he must realize that your marriage hasn't jelled and you're headed for a divorce court anyway. I've been watching you together. I know it's true."

As she didn't speak he turned her face to his and took her lips very slowly in a long kiss. This was it, she told herself. This time he had really let go. Yet she felt curiously let down.

"Keith," she said, "take me home. I have to think this over."

"Of course," he answered and ordered the driver to turn back.

"Keith," Jinny said, "there's Dibs to be considered."

"I have considered her. It happens, Jinny, that I have a house in Connecticut which I use only for an occasional week-end. We can get a good nurse for the youngster and send her there."

"Why not keep her with us in New York?"

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Well, naturally, I'd want you to myself for a time. After the war I imagine her father will want to take her back."

"Keith, how would you feel about having children of your own?"

"We'll cross that bridge, darling, when we come to it." And he began to talk of Reno and how very long those six weeks would seem to him. But when she got back he would take a leave and they could honeymoon in the mountains. He didn't seem to notice that Jinny was very quiet.

At her house Keith came in as a matter of course and asked for a nightcap. Jinny got a tray with ice, Scotch and soda. "This is a nice house," Keith said as he mixed their highballs. "We might keep it after we're married. Why so quiet?" he added, dropping on the arm of her chair.

"I don't know."

He finished half his drink and then set the glass down on the table beside him. His arm was around her, and he had tipped her face to his, when they heard the bell ring.

"Damn!" Keith muttered and went to sit on the sofa.

"HI!" Eric said, smiling at them from the foyer. "I see you really are taking care of my wife, Lieutenant."

"I enjoy it, Captain. Did you have a good trip?"

"Not very," Eric answered, beginning to mix himself a drink. "I'm ordered to Florida for a while, but I'd rather take England any time."

"Florida," Jinny said, her heart giving a little flip of relief.

Keith drained his glass, set it down sharply and came to a decision. "Look, Captain," he said, "I'd like to make a life work out of caring for Jinny."

"What do you mean by that?" Eric asked, putting ice cubes in the glass.

"We're in love with each other," Keith answered bluntly.

"Please!" Jinny began helplessly.

"I thought as much," Eric said, stirring the highball thoughtfully.

Keith went on, "Jinny feels that divorcing you right now would be a rotten thing to do. But I told her that we were three civilized people and I was sure you would be reasonable."

"Of course," Eric agreed. He walked over to the mantel and stood gazing down at the fireplace. He looked thin, tired, and so lonely that Jinny had a sudden impulse to go and stand beside him. "Of course," he said, turning around, "under the circumstances I take Dibs. I'll have to do that."

"No!" Jinny was on her feet.

"After all, Jinny," Keith said, "that would be no more than fair. I'm sure the captain would leave the child here in New York and let you see her as often as you liked."

"Certainly." Eric's lopsided smile was bitter. "Far be it from me to keep a mother from her child."

"You're a swell chap," Keith said. "As I told Jinny—"

She wasn't listening. Under her lashes she stole a quick glance at Eric, his lean waist, broad shoulders and the hollows under his cheekbones which had no business there. She remembered his arms about her and the sudden lightning of his kiss. Then, emerging from her reverie, she heard Keith say, "We're all completely civilized, thank heaven, so—"

"I'm not," Jinny broke in.

"What do you mean?"

"If civilization," she cried, "means being as utterly selfish and egotistic as you, then I'm a head-hunter or a Ubangi. Take another man's wife if you can get her, that's your code. Separate a mother from her child if it suits your convenience. You have no morals, Keith Norvall, only desires."

"Jinny!" he exclaimed in amazement. "What's happened to you?"

"Something marvelous has happened. I

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

have suddenly discovered that I wouldn't marry you if I had a dozen divorces. I have also discovered that I like the kind of man who rushes off to join the A.E.F. in England so he can get into action as fast as possible, the kind who ad libs his kisses instead of rehearsing them and who can put a baby to bed as expertly as he pilots a plane to Berlin. I like . . . Eric," she finished in a hushed voice, and went to him, feeling his arm tighten about her shoulders.

Eric's smile was tinged with triumph. "Well," he told Keith, "you were wrong. Our marriage wasn't headed for the rocks. And that seems to be that."

"You only think it is," Keith retorted, his face dark with anger. "There's more to this right-about-face than meets the eye. It might be because you won't give up the child, and Jinny wants her enough to stick by you. Well, I won't have it. Jinny's going with me." Keith advanced menacingly and reached out for Jinny.

Eric dropped his arm from Jinny's shoulders, took three giant strides and hooked his right fist neatly under Keith's chin. There was a crash as he went down, taking with him Jinny's highball and a small-sized table. Keith sat up groggily, feeling his chin, then the back of his head. After that, his eyes focused on Eric who was standing over him.

"Now, listen—" Keith began.

"*You* listen," Eric interrupted. "Jinny has finally come to her senses and is through with you. What she ever saw in you I'll never know. Well, you've had your chance to wreck my home, and failed. Now get out—and stay out."

Keith muttered something and stumbled to his feet. A minute later the dim-out swallowed him. Grinning ruefully, Eric ran his hands over his hair.

"Okay," he said finally, "let's have it, Jinny. Why the right-about-face? Afraid of losing Dibs? Is that your only reason? Or is there another?"

JINNY drew a long, sighing breath. "No," she answered shakily, "afraid of losing you."

Eric's arms were about her, hard and hurting. "Don't say it," he whispered. "Don't ever say that, my darling, unless you mean it."

"I do. Oh, Eric, I do." And blindly she drew his lips to hers.

Aching tenderness, akin to her feeling for Dibs, merged into a fierce sweep of emotion. The world was Eric's arms, so strong and sure, the world his lips upon her own. Finally, she turned her cheek to his shoulder and a great peace stole over her. This was love. This was belonging. With that, she remembered and drew back to look at him, her eyes doubtful and questioning.

"Because of Dibs," Jinny said, "I couldn't quite wish that I had been first in your life. And yet—"

"You *are* the first in my life."

"But your wife, Eric."

"I seem born to get myself mixed up in cock-eyed marriages. Elizabeth never was my wife, really."

"Eric!" Jinny cried, trying to shake his big shoulders. "What are you saying?"

"Dibs' father, Jinny, was a Russian, an Army officer. He was killed before Elizabeth even knew that she would have a child."

"Then Dibs isn't yours? But, where do you come in, Eric?"

"As I told you, Elizabeth was half American. When I met her she was obsessed with the idea of getting to the States and having her child born here. As my wife she could secure a visa. That's how we happened to go through a civil marriage ceremony. But my company didn't want me to leave Russia and Elizabeth wasn't well enough to travel alone, so Dibs was born there after all. When Elizabeth was dying I promised to see that the baby got to America."

Jinny swallowed a lump in her throat.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Eric Andrews," she cried, "did you do all that for a girl you didn't even love?"

"It was the least I could do," he exclaimed roughly. "Anyway, from the first time Dibs curled her fingers around mine—"

"Hello, sucker," Jinny said tenderly, her lashes spangled in tears.

"Who's a sucker? I remember a gal in Lisbon who kept turning over her boat reservation to some one who apparently needed it more than she did. Such a sweet little kid, she was, with brown eyes and golden hair. I fell for her one minute and twenty seconds after I first laid eyes on her. But she couldn't see me for remembering some lad she'd met on the Riviera."

"You mean all the while—"

He nodded. "All the while, every minute. That's the reason I went through with this nonsense. I didn't want you hurt by that conceited pup you were so crazy about. I don't want you hurt, sweetheart, ever. I'll never let it happen again."

"I'm an awful fool," Jinny said brokenly, a big tear running down her cheek.

"Precious little fool!" he answered, kissing away the tear. "Could Dibs be left with the maid tomorrow while we run down to Maryland and keep a date with a marrying parson?"

"I'm sure she could. I'm even sure that Dibs is going to like Florida."

"Florida," he said huskily, "with you and Dibs. It's going to be something to remember when—"

But Jinny drew his lips to hers. "This is now," she murmured, "and we're together. Let's not think about the rest."

But Jinny knew that the rest would be all right, too. Now Eric had a family to come home to, and he never would let them down. *This* was love, Jinny knew. What she had felt for Keith had just been a reasonable facsimile. Smiling, she lifted her lips to Eric's again.

The Hero Takes A Wife

By HELEN COMPTON

Now On Sale

A glamorous young actress starring on Broadway has the world at her feet, and Tulle had everything she wanted—except Captain Gary Marshall's love.

Quiet and serious, Gary didn't love Tulle because he believed she was vain and selfish, that her only purpose was to have fun. Hurt by his misunderstanding, Tulle would not explain that sorrow had taught her to laugh so that she would not cry. To Tulle, laughter was a weapon to bolster the home front.

When Gary described the growing attraction between them as infatuation, not love, Tulle retorted, "Cynics say there is a sure cure for infatuation—marriage." And Gary accepted her challenge. What happens when two people so different in temperament and background marry? Can a laughter-loving girl like Tulle win the love of a man like Gary? Read this timely story of a war hero and his bride in the October issue.

NOW 10¢ ALL-STORY LOVE

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Bargain in Bridegrooms

By DORIS KNIGHT

The price Anne paid for a bridegroom didn't include a lifetime guarantee of his love.

ANNE was sorry she was wearing her double fox furs and the sumptuous black suit. It gave her an advantage over Melissa Blanding in her inexpensive tan coat and plain little hat.

Then she looked into Melissa's eyes and knew it was Melissa who had the advantage after all. This was one case where money didn't count.

Anne said in her easy, friendly manner, "It was nice of you to come, Miss Blanding. I'm afraid I am a little late for our appointment. But I've been busy with Red Cross work. Won't you have a cocktail?"

Melissa shook her head. "Let's stop playing with words, Miss Sherman," she said coolly. "I like things direct. I know why you asked me here. You want Rich Lawrence." She turned the diamond ring on her engagement finger meaningly. "But I've got Rich. He's going to marry me next month. Unless you've got a proposition to make to me?"

Anne sat down hastily. Her legs seemed to have collapsed under her. She was in love with Rich Lawrence. More in love than she had known she could be. Many men had wanted to marry Anne, but she had refused all of them. She was waiting for the one man to come along. And at last, he had come!

Only, he was engaged to his secretary, Melissa Blanding.

Anne had taken an unreasoning dislike to Melissa, the first time she saw her. And something Rich said, had given her the idea that he wasn't terribly in love with Melissa after all, but had merely drifted into an engagement. So Anne had asked Melissa to tea, and now, she was saying these extraordinary things!

Anne gasped something incoherent.

Melissa said, "I'm pretty crazy about Rich. After all, he found me when I really needed a job, and hired me for his secretary. It's been fun working for him. There's never a dull moment, but it all boils down to this, Miss Sherman; I want money, even more than I want Rich Lawrence. So how's about it? How high are you willing to go to get the man you love?"

Anne's mouth shut in an angry line. She caught sight of her reflection in the Chinese mirror on the south wall. She saw a tall, slim girl, beautifully dressed to bring out all her best points. She saw unhappy brown eyes and dark hair done in a sleek pompadour. Melissa was reflected, too. Melissa with her predatory eyes and childish figure. Melissa was the sort of girl women would always recognize as grasping and selfish, and that men would always see as a pathetic little blonde thing who needed to be sheltered and cared for.

Melissa laughed. It was an unpleasant sound. She said, "It doesn't sound nice, does it, Miss Sherman? But being poor isn't nice either. And I've been poor, so poor that I'm not taking any chances on having it happen again. If you don't like my scheme, I'll marry Rich. That would be one step up for me, but I'm going further. I'm going to get an even richer hus-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"This is our engagement party, fellows," Rich said. "And you can quote us as saying we are the two happiest people in the world."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

band, and when I do I'll leave Rich flat. He won't have any ideals or love or faith left afterward, but I'm not going to let that stop me. Rich can look out for himself, and if the pieces aren't worth gathering up that's his hard luck."

An idea flitted through Anne's mind. She said, "When did you get engaged to Rich Lawrence?"

Melissa laughed again. "You're smarter than I thought!" she said. "We got engaged the night you two met. I knew you fell for each other on sight! And I knew then that I'd have to work fast or I'd find myself out in the cold, looking for another job."

Anne thought, I ought to throw this horrible little golddigger out! But she didn't. Instead, she thought of Rich Lawrence. Rich, the explorer. Tall, good-looking, unconscious of his own charm. She thought of his steadfast blue eyes and his mouth which promised so much love. Rich, generous, charming. Easy prey for a conscienceless little schemer like Melissa. If she bought off Melissa it wouldn't mean Rich was hers. But at least it would save his future, and he would be free again to choose a wife.

In all her twenty years, Anne never had been really in love before. But one look deep into Rich's exciting blue eyes, and she knew. Rich was the one for her. If she didn't get him, there wouldn't be anyone else, ever, for her. She might marry. But it would be a makeshift marriage. A compromise with life.

She found herself saying calmly, "How much do you want?"

MELISSA studied her carefully. She was excited, but she tried not to show it. Finally she said, "Five thousand dollars. That's what I want for giving up Rich."

Anne thought, This is absurd! This can't be happening to me. I ought to laugh and tell this girl to get out of here.

But she didn't. She kept thinking about Rich and how much she loved him. She remembered her grandmother's trust fund. It was her own to do with as she pleased. Five thousand dollars meant so little to her, and it might mean saving Rich's entire future. How could she say no?

"If I should give you five thousand dollars," she began wearily, "what assurance have I that you'll get out of Rich's life?"

Melissa's eyes were wide and eager with excitement. "Oh, I'll break with Rich. Right away. Before you pay the money. I'll deliver the goods first. Only perhaps . . ." She stopped.

"Only what?" Anne asked woodenly.

"Only we better have some sort of agreement. You know, make it business-like. Write something like, 'If Melissa Blanding releases Richmond Lawrence from his engagement I agree to pay her the sum of five thousand dollars immediately.' That will protect both of us." Melissa was very jaunty about it all. She went over to Anne's desk and sat down and began to write. "I'll do it," she said. "All you've got to do is sign."

Anne felt sick. But she signed the paper without even looking at what Melissa had written. Anne's one idea was to have the horrible transaction over. It was so humiliating! Buying love!

Melissa put the paper inside her purse and closed the catch with a decisive little snap. "You're going to the party given for Rich at the Astor, aren't you?" At Anne's nod, Melissa went on, "Good. I'll show you I've done my part. Then tomorrow you can open an account for me at your bank with the five thousand!"

She put on her hat and coat and started for the front door.

Anne began to wake up to the enormity of the course to which she was committed, "No. Wait! Come back, Melissa. I've decided . . ."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But it was too late.

Melissa had gone.

Anne dressed in her most beautiful gown that night. She was shivering a little as she slid into the dainty gossamer black net with the tiny stars appliqued on every inch of the delicate material.

She rang for Simpkins, the butler. "Is my father coming home to dinner tonight?" she asked.

Simpkins shook his head. "No, Miss Sherman. He telephoned a little while ago that he was dining at his club."

So that was that. She knew her mother was at a war-bond rally. There was nobody around to advise her.

When she arrived at the hotel and was directed to the private dining room where the dinner was being given for Rich, she was trembling with excitement.

They told her that she was to sit next to him. As she came into the room, crowded with important people come to hear what Rich had to say about the far places of the world which war had suddenly brought so near, he saw her and smiled. She looked at him and tried to smile in return, but her mouth felt wooden and stiff.

Rich's eyes were shining eagerly as he looked at her. Clear across the room, she felt the warmth of his presence and thrilled. Then she saw Melissa, dressed in a light blue evening gown. Melissa was talking to an important-looking older man, but she was looking over his shoulder at Anne and she seemed oddly triumphant. That frightened Anne, somehow.

Rich broke away from the people surrounding him and came to Anne. "I'm so glad you're here," he said. Then he added in a tone too low for anyone else to hear, "We've got a date, after this affair is over! Don't you forget that!"

She smiled at him faintly and nodded. Then people surged around them again and there was no time to say anything else.

THE dinner was a sort of blur, but she learned that Rich, through his explorations, had done the war effort a great service, and was being sent on another mission shortly for the government. She felt a sick surge of the heart at the mere thought of Rich going away. She happened to glance down the table at Melissa who sat near the foot. Melissa was holding up her left hand casually so she could see there was no ring on her engagement finger. So Melissa had already carried out her part of the bargain! Anne's eyes grew dark with excitement.

After Rich's speech, people lingered a long time, asking him questions, talking, arguing war questions of strategy.

Finally, Rich looked at his watch. "I'm sorry. I've got to rush along, now," he said, giving Anne a meaning glance. Under his breath he said, "Meet me in ten minutes outside the Times Building. I've got to talk to you! This can't wait." He seemed seething with inner excitement.

She whispered, "Yes," and her whole body went tense with excitement.

It was spooky in the dimout, waiting for Rich. Before the war, Broadway had been as light as day. Now, shadows lurked everywhere. There were plenty of people but the dusk seemed to shut them away from each other. She could hear voices and laughter and feel the quick brush of people hurrying past, but she felt alone.

Then all at once, Rich was there. He took hold of both her hands, and said, "Darling, we've got to go somewhere to celebrate. Oh, darling, darling, darling!"

He bundled her into a cab. She was in his arms and his lips claimed hers, wonderfully, completely. That kiss was all Anne had dreamed it would be. It was the end and aim of her very existence. It was heaven!

Rich said boyishly, the words tumbling over each other, "Anne, I'm not engaged any more. Melissa . . . Well, you know, she's a fine girl. A loyal secretary. But

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I've never been in love with her. She needed some one to look after her, Anne. To shield her from the world! She's such a helpless little thing. Well, somehow, I don't know exactly how, we got engaged. So when I met you and knew you were the only one in the world for me, I couldn't ask you to be my wife! But now, Melissa is in love with somebody else. Oh, Anne, Anne!" He kissed her again, tumultuously, wonderfully.

Anne whispered huskily, "Is this a proposal, Rich? Is it?"

Rich said abruptly, "I was so happy at being free, I never thought that maybe you didn't feel the same magic spell I experienced! I'm afraid I took too much for granted. I thought, when we first looked into each other's eyes that you knew, as I did, that we were made for each other."

Anne clung to him. "I just wanted to hear you say it! Oh, Rich, I love you so!"

They went into the Stork Club. Somehow, a table was brought magically out of nowhere, for them.

As they drank each other's health in champagne, Rich said, "We'll have a good life, darling, one that I'll make for us. Happiness isn't something you can buy, Anne, but we'll earn ours together."

She felt a scared ripple of impending disaster sweep over her. It was uncanny the way Rich spoke of buying happiness, as if he knew of her bargain with Melissa.

Rich went on, "I know you've always had all the things you want, darling, but it hasn't spoiled you. I'm glad, because I hate spoiled, selfish girls who think life is nothing but a merry-go-round. There are big things to do, and we'll do them together." There was a bright, excited look in Rich's eyes. "And I've got a surprise for you, something I think you'll like."

His happiness was contagious. Anne said quickly, "Oh, Rich, tell me? What is it?"

"I think I'll be able to take you along on my next mission," Rich said. "We'll make it our honeymoon, because it's my last trip before I go into the Army. I want my wife along with me, Anne, always. Sharing my life and adventures. Being my other self. Do you want to go, darling?" he asked huskily. "Would you like it?"

Would she like it? The very thought of being separated from him was tearing her to bits. But now, she hardly took time to answer because terror was claiming her. Terror that something might go wrong before they could be married, that Melissa might turn up and expose the sordid bargain they had made!

GOSSIP columnists were coming over to their table. Asking questions, looking bright-eyed and inquisitive.

Rich held Anne's hand openly. "This is our engagement party, fellows," he said. "You can quote us both as saying we are the two happiest people in the world, barring none!"

Anne nodded. She was so frightened her throat had closed up and she couldn't speak.

When they had gone Rich said, "You didn't like that horde of reporters much, did you, sweet? Never mind, they don't have reporters away up in the Andes, and that's where we're going. There's an important deposit of tin there in a spot controlled by Indians. They like me, and I can make a deal with them. That's why the government is sending me. You see how important it is, don't you, dear?"

Anne saw only that she adored him, and that if he found out what she had done he would hate her. Rich was an idealist, he didn't want any woman to protect him and shelter him from life. She knew now that she had been a fool; Melissa never could break Rich's spirit and ambition.

Suddenly she knew what she must do. It was the only way, before something terrible happened. "Rich," she whispered, "I've always been superstitious about long

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

engagements. As a matter of fact, I don't even like engagements. So—so how about being married right away? Eloping?"

He stared at her as if she had taken leave of her senses. "I was planning on getting you an engagement ring tomorrow," he told her.

Anne thought about the diamond rings she had which she didn't even wear. She would love his ring, of course, but what if Melissa should change her mind by tomorrow?

She suggested hastily, "Why not make it an engagement-wedding ring?"

Rich didn't like the idea.

"I never did like elopements. I want your people to know about our getting married. I want you to wear white satin and . . ." he began.

She cut in. "I'll tell my people!" She was getting desperate. "Oh, Rich, there's so little time in war days! You've told me you'll be in the Army, right after you do this last job for the government. I want every single minute with you that I can have. I want to be married tonight!"

RICH stood right beside her while she called up her home. Luckily, her father and mother were both in. While the butler went to find her father, Rich smiled at her. "I'll be outside," he said and went out of the booth.

Anne heaved a big sigh of relief. That was one break. When she heard her father's voice she hurried right into the middle of her story. She had to make this good, or her father would never stand for an elopement. He would be as difficult as Rich.

"So don't you see, darling?" she finished. "You've always been so understanding. You told me if I ever did find the one man in the world for me, to go right after him. Well, this is the only way I can get him. Please try to understand."

She was almost in tears.

There was a long silence on the other end of the line, then her father said slowly, "I'll fix things with your mother, Anne. If you're as sure as that, go ahead, and—and be happy!" His voice was gruff, the way it always got when he went emotional.

Anne said something incoherent and hung up. "When I told them about you, it was all right," she said.

Rich stopped fussing then. He was as much in love with her as she was with him. But the red tape it took to get a plane to Virginia almost stopped them. However, at dawn they took off. Things got a little blurred for Anne, right then. There was a license, a corsage, and a ring to be bought. By the time they stood in the front parlor of the justice of the peace's cottage, Anne was too utterly worn out to be thrilled over the marvelous words of the marriage service. But she wasn't too weary to be thrilled by her husband's kiss!

Anne expected they would honeymoon in Virginia, but they didn't have that much luck. Rich had to contact a government man in New York about the trip to the Andes. The date was for ten in the morning. They made it with fifteen minutes to spare.

Rich went racing to his hotel room to change his clothes and Anne took a taxi home. They were to meet at the hotel at one o'clock for a wedding breakfast and to make plans for their future together.

As Anne rode home, oblivious of the curiosity in the taximan's eyes as he eyed her formal dress, she thought triumphantly, I've done it! No one can come between us now. I'm Mrs. Richmond Lawrence!

The family cried over her and wanted to meet Rich and yearned over all the details of the wedding. "Don't give it out to the papers yet!" she warned the family. "We want to have our honeymoon first."

She had two hours sleep and dressed carefully in a charming gray suit and tip-tilted hat with a little floating veil, which

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

made her look like a bride. With flowers pinned to her furs she went to meet Rich, her heart aflame with love.

Rich swept her into his arms and gave her a tumultuous kiss, in spite of the crowd in the lobby. Anne's spirits rose still higher. Everything was perfect.

As they walked along Fifth Avenue, arm in arm, Anne saw a tiny bride and groom, fashioned to go on top a wedding cake. They were pretty little figures with sweet smiling faces. She cried, "I always wanted one of those silly things!"

Immediately Rich went into the store and bought the bridal couple. They were wrapped in cellophane. He handed them to her with a deep bow. "The gift of the groom to his bride!" he said huskily, his eyes filled with love of her.

Anne felt her throat choke up. "Oh, my darling!" she whispered.

That was the way things started. Nobody paid much attention to them. They got a table near the wall in one of the least conspicuous places, and began their luncheon, looking deep into each other's eyes, with the silly little bridal figure which belonged atop a cake, beaming at them from the center of the table.

That was the way Melissa found them!

MELISSA was different. Anne saw that she had been to a beauty parlor, and she was wearing a new outfit.

Anne thought, with a sinking of the heart, "She did that on my money!"

There wasn't time for Anne to do any further thinking, because Melissa was talking, shyly, sadly: "Oh, Rich, I've been looking all over for you! I was so worried when you didn't come back to the hotel last night. I was afraid you were taking our broken engagement badly. And, darling, I've been thinking things over. I'm afraid I made a mistake. I—"

Her voice stopped short, right there, because she had seen the bride and groom in the middle of the table. She cried, shrilly: "What's that?"

Rich looked uncomfortable. "You can be the first to know, Melissa. Anne and I were married last night!"

A look of hatred twisted Melissa's sharp little face. Uninvited, she sank down in a chair next to Rich. But suddenly she veiled the expression in her eyes and said, "Oh, Rich, what have I done to you? I meant it all for the best! You've got to believe that. But I loved you so much that when Miss Sherman approached me and asked me to get out of your life I—"

Rich broke into this jumble. The joy had faded from his face. His eyes were hurt. "What are you saying, Melissa?"

Melissa said bitterly, "Anne Sherman paid me to break our engagement. She came to me and offered me five thousand dollars to step out of the picture. I took the money, Rich, because I loved you so much."

ANNE sat there, petrified with horror. This was worse than anything she had imagined might happen. She had underestimated Melissa. She had thought the girl wouldn't tell Rich the truth, ever, because of her own part in the transaction. But Melissa was whitewashing her own self and putting Anne in the worst possible light.

Melissa was saying with a pathetic little gasp in her voice, "Oh, Rich, I loved you so much! And I knew you were going to have to borrow five thousand dollars to outfit your Andean expedition. So I took her up on that proposition of hers. I didn't mean to keep my bargain, darling. I admit that, with shame. I love you too much to give you up, ever. But I did want to get the money for you. It would have been just a loan. I meant to pay it back. And I didn't think it would matter. Because she is so awfully rich. Why shoudn't I take five thousand dollars for you?"

Anne and Rich looked deep into each other's eyes. Rich's face seemed to have

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

aged years. He said hoarsely, "This isn't true, is it, Anne?"

Anne tried to break out of the lethargy of horror which held her. She had to defend her happiness and fight for her love. She said quietly, "It wasn't exactly like that, Rich. Melissa came to me and suggested the cash price for—for getting out of the picture. I—"

He wasn't listening to her. Melissa had taken a paper out. He was reading the awful paper Anne had signed. "My bill of sale!" he snapped furiously. "I must say I went pretty cheap! If you're so filthy rich, Anne, why didn't I bring more on the auction block?"

Melissa whispered brokenly, "Oh, that was my fault, Rich. I didn't want more than five thousand. Just the amount that would outfit your expedition to the Andes for the government."

Anne said fiercely, "That's not true! You must have spent part of it already!"

Melissa made big eyes. "Why, Miss Sherman!" she said. She slipped out the savings book Anne had got for her. The five thousand dollars was untouched!

Rich was so furious then that he saw red. Reporters came just at the wrong moment. They listened in on some of the discussion before anyone knew they were there. Then they went off, with whoops of glee.

Rich said quietly to Anne, "I never want to see you again, as long as I live." He got up and went off with Melissa clinging comfortingly to his arm.

As he left, his elbow tipped the little bride and groom from the table. They lay there on the floor pathetically. A waiter picked them up. "They're broken," he said and was going to throw them away. But Anne took them. She put the little broken figures in her handbag, then she left the hotel with her head held high.

She was numbed by horror and heartbreak. She walked and walked, not knowing nor caring where she went. The afternoon papers came out, and the sensational ones made Melissa into a heroine.

She began to be furious.

"It isn't right. Just because Melissa is poor everyone is on her side. Yet she is the cheat. Not me. They think that money can buy anything, but I have nothing, without Rich."

Her anger began to break down her numbness. She went to her own hairdresser and found out that Melissa had spent one hundred dollars there—and charged it to Anne! It was the same all over town. Melissa had gone to dress shops and hat shops and charged things right and left, showing an order with Anne's signature on it. It *was* Anne's signature, too. No doubt about that. Every fashionable store told the same story.

It was dusk by the time she reached Rich's hotel. He had left shortly after two, they said.

Anne thought grimly, They think money can buy anything. Well, all right. Here goes! She offered a hundred dollars for his address—and got it.

Anne paid another hundred dollars to go up to his room, unannounced. She knocked and when Rich's voice answered gruffly, demanding to know who it was, she answered huskily, "Chambermaid with towels, sir."

Rich opened the door and she slipped inside before he could close it again.

EVIDENTLY he had been working. The table was piled with papers.

Anne faced him squarely. "You're acting like a two-year-old, Rich. You didn't let me explain, even though you listened to Melissa. You haven't been fair."

He wouldn't look at her. He said, "Melissa has been terribly hurt! She is the one who loved me, really. She's the one who made sacrifices for me. I mean to marry Melissa and make her happy."

Anne snapped, "Don't be so darned noble about this! Melissa got me to sign a

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

paper, ostensibly that paper she showed you, but I know now that wasn't it. Not much. She typed an order saying that she was to be given unlimited charge accounts all over town."

Rich's mouth set in a firm line. "Melissa already has told me about that paper. It was part of my purchase price, wasn't it? Just an added inducement to tempt a girl who never has had money to spend on herself. Well, I'm glad she used it. She's never had any pretty things to wear, poor kid. But it's pretty low of you to say she forged the signature. That's hitting below the belt, Anne. You're rich and she's poor and has no one to fight for her. That was a rotten thing for you to accuse her of."

Anne gasped. "Of all the idiotic fools!" she flung at him. "All right. If you're that foolish, marry Melissa! Let her twist you around her crooked little finger and jump through the hoop! She'll use you till she's tired of you, then she'll toss you aside for bigger game! She boasted to me she'd do just that. That's why I gave her that silly money to bow out of the picture. I thought I was saving you." She drew a deep, shuddering breath. "I did that, because I didn't want you to get hurt! Well, go ahead and break your foolish heart. Marry Melissa and see what sort of dance she'll lead you. I'm through!"

At noon the next day, a lawyer came to see her about an annulment. Rich had sent him. Anne told him that she had no intention of divorcing Rich.

That afternoon Rich called her up, furiously demanding to know what she was trying to do. Anne said composedly, "I found out that you like cheats and liars better than those who tell the truth. So I'm taking a leaf from Melissa's book. I'm going to be just like her. I'm going after what I want—and that doesn't happen to be an annulment."

He slammed down the telephone without answering.

The next day, Rich telephoned again. He wanted to come out and talk with her personally. They made a date for that evening.

Anne dressed in her most becoming gown, a soft white chiffon which made her look like a bride.

It wasn't easy to talk to Rich. He was angry and suspicious, and he restlessly paced the drawing room floor.

Rich said determinedly, "I've got passage for myself and wife for my Andes mission, Anne, and I intend taking Melissa with me. She's a perfect secretary and I need her but I can't take her with me unless you get an annulment in time for us to be married. Will you get it immediately, Anne? There can't be anything between us anymore. Why be vindictive about what has happened?"

Anne said, "I'll give you the annulment, Rich, but only when you come back from the Andes. That was to have been our honeymoon. I don't intend to let any other woman take my place."

"You mean you won't let Melissa take your place. You hate her, don't you, Anne?"

Anne sighed, and then said softly, "Are you sure you haven't been mistaken in Melissa, Rich? Are you sure she is the girl you think she is?"

Just then there was a commotion out in the hall. Rich frowned and said, "What under heaven is that racket?"

Melissa came dashing in, past a frantically protesting butler. Anne knew that she was seething with anger, but she controlled her fury beautifully. She said, "Rich, Anne Sherman is the lowest thing on earth. This will certainly prove it."

She pointed accusingly to the man who had followed her into the drawing room. It was one of the reporters who had been at the hotel the day before.

Melissa said, "I met this reporter yesterday at the hotel, and he called me tonight and asked me to go dancing. I thought he was probably looking for an-

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

other story, and I went along just to see what he was planning. Well," she said dramatically, "I found out. And it wasn't a story he wanted."

Rich said quietly, "What did happen, Melissa?"

Melissa pointed triumphantly at Anne. "Ask Miss Sherman," she said. "Let her tell you about this little trick. And then the next time she tells you she loves you—laugh."

Rich turned to Anne. "Can you tell me what this is all about?" he asked quietly.

There was no use lying. Anne had thought she could stoop to any level to get Rich back. She had intended fighting fire with fire, but she couldn't go through with it.

"Melissa's right," she said slowly. "It was a trick. I bribed this reporter to take her out. I thought if she had too much to drink she would tell him the truth. She has been lying to you, Rich. I had to prove it. I was just trying to do the things with my money that everyone thinks I can do. But it's no good. Money doesn't buy happiness, and it can't outwit a schemer like Melissa." She smiled wryly. "Since I failed, I'll be a good sport and pay off my losses. I'll give you an annulment tomorrow and you and Melissa can be married."

Anne stood there, straight and tall and proud, with her heart breaking, and held out her hand to Rich in farewell.

Melissa sobbed, "Oh, it was such a wicked thing to do to me!"

Rich didn't take Anne's hand. He didn't reply to Melissa the way she expected him to do. He said, "Do you think it was a wicked thing, Melissa? Funny! I don't! For a while I had a bad case of hurt pride. I was humiliated that you two women should do a job of buying and selling me! I hated you both for it. But I hated Anne worst because I thought she didn't love me at all. I thought I was just a new mechanical toy marked, 'Explorer,' that she was buying to amuse herself with, for a while. I thought she didn't love me, really, that it was just the idea of getting something that was out of her reach. But now that Anne has gone to this length to show me how much she cares, I'm beginning to wake up. I'm beginning to forget silly pride and know only that Anne and I were created to meet and fall in love and marry."

Melissa's blue eyes went cold and hard. She said, "Don't think you can get out of marrying me, Rich Lawrence! I'll sue you for breach of promise! I'll . . . "

Rich said quietly, "You're going to give back Anne's five thousand dollars, Melissa. That is what you're going to do. I'll have no woman buying me, no matter if it is the woman I love!"

Melissa stopped being sweet and pathetic then. She stripped off her veneer and reverted to type. It was pretty horrible. When she was gone finally, Rich wiped his forehead.

"How I've been fooled!" he said. Then humbly, "Anne, I don't suppose you can ever forgive me?"

Anne said, casually, "What do you mean, a fool? You were taken in by an expert, darling. That girl is really good." She added, "All the things she bought she can keep. With that equipment, it won't take her long to find another . . . "

"Fool. Fall guy. Sucker!" Rich put in grimly. He added, "Anne, let's start in all over again? Would you, darling? Would you marry me all over again, wearing white and with all your friends around you, and the organ playing?"

Anne's heart was so happy it was doing a rumba beat. She said softly, "Wait here a minute, darling!"

She went upstairs and came down with the little mended figure of the bride and groom. She held it out to Rich. "We'll have a real wedding with all the trimmings, darling," she whispered. "Even to these on top of the wedding cake."

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Acid Indigestion

Relieved in 5 Minutes or Double Your Money Back

When excess stomach acid causes painful, suffocating gas, sour stomach and heartburn, doctors usually prescribe the fastest-acting medicines known for symptomatic relief—medicines like those in Bell-ans Tablets. No laxative. Bell-ans brings comfort in a jiffy or double your money back on return of bottle to us. 25c everywhere.

High School Course at Home — **Many Finish in 2 Years**

Go as rapidly as your time and abilities permit. Course equivalent to resident school work—prepares for college entrance exams. Standard H.S. texts supplied. Diploma. Credit for H. S. subjects already completed. Single subjects if desired. High school education is very important for advancement in business and industry and socially. Don't be handicapped all your life. Be a High School graduate. Start your training now. Free Bulletin on request. No obligation.

American School, Dept. H749, Drexel at 58th, Chicago

Free for Asthma

If you suffer with attacks of Asthma so terrible you choke and gasp for breath, if restful sleep is impossible because of the struggle to breathe, if you feel the disease is slowly wearing your life away, don't fail to send at once to the Frontier Asthma Co. for a free trial of a remarkable method. No matter where you live or whether you have any faith in any remedy under the Sun, send for this free trial. If you have suffered a lifetime and tried everything you could learn of without relief; even if you are utterly discouraged, do not abandon hope but send today for this free trial. It will cost you nothing. Address

Frontier Asthma Co. — **459-K Frontier Bldg.**

462 Niagara St. — **Buffalo, N. Y.**

A KEY TO SHOP PRACTICE For Every Machinist, Toolmaker, Machine Operator, Draughtsman, Metal Worker, Mechanic or Student. Covers Shop Practice in All Branches.

A READY REFERENCE Tells How to Operate and Set Up Lathes, Screw and Milling Machines, Shapers, Drill Presses and All Machine Tools.

5 PRACTICAL BOOKS IN ONE! 60 FULLY ILLUSTRATED CHAPTERS Covering: 1—Modern Machine Shop Practice. 2—Blue Print Reading and How to Draw. 3—Calculations & Mathematics for Machinists. 4—Shop Physics. 5—How to Use Slide Rule.

Get This Information for Yourself. Mail Coupon Today. No Obligation Unless Satisfied, ASK TO SEE IT.

1600 PAGES FULLY ILLUSTRATED — $4 COMPLETE • PAY ONLY $1 MO.

THEO. AUDEL & CO., 49 WEST 23rd STREET, NEW YORK

Mail AUDELS MACHINISTS & TOOLMAKERS HANDY BOOK. Price $4 on 7 Days Free Trial. If O. K. I will remit $1 in 7 days and $1 monthly until $4 is paid. Otherwise I will return it.

Name_____

Address_____

Occupation_____

Reference_____ PER

Pen Pals

Dora Dean, Hostess

♥ ♥ ♥

TO JOIN—Write me a letter telling about yourself, your school or work, your hobbies and pastimes, in fact the sort of letter which will make readers want to write to you. Sign a nickname, but also give me your real name and address plainly written. You will be given a number under which you will find your letter published in Love Short Stories.

TO WRITE TO A PAL—Select someone who interests you, and write your letter, signing your own name and address so the reply will come direct to you. Put this into a STAMPED ENVELOPE, but DO NOT SEAL THIS ENVELOPE. On the corner of this envelope write the number of the Pal you wish it forwarded to. Put this envelope and your letter in another envelope, and address this one to Dora Dean, Love Short Stories, 210 East 43rd St., New York City. You may write several Pals if you wish, but be sure to enclose a stamped envelope for each.

Notify Dora Dean at once of any change in address, giving your number, name, old and new address.

♥ ♥ ♥

L-1740 JUST A SCHOOL GIRL

I go to school and love all sports, movies, dancing, singing, riding, reading and writing letters. I am fifteen and a brunette with light eyes, five feet two inches tall. I promise to answer all letters and exchange snapshots.

Cathie.

L-1741 INDIANA BOY

I am a boy of fifteen, looking for Pen Pals. I am five feet eight with brown eyes, dark wavy hair and am a sophomore in high school. I like basketball, football, swimming and horseback riding. I love to write letters. Let me hear from you all from fifteen to seventeen.

Curly.

L-1742 KENTUCKY MOUNTAIN GIRL

I live in the mountains of old Kentucky and it is a very beautiful place. I am sixteen, five feet one with black hair, blue eyes and olive complexion. I like all sports especially swimming. My friends call me "Dynamite" because they say I am little and dangerous. I promise to answer all letters and will exchange photographs.

Clara.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

PEN PALS

L-1743 TWO WESTERN GIRLS
We are both eighteen, have dark hair and eyes, fair complexions and wear glasses. We love dancing and good music and we like outdoor life. We are both approximately five feet three and weigh around one hundred fifteen. We like horseback riding and bicycling. We are looking for Pen Pals.

Judy and Jane.

L-1744 LONELY KENTUCKIAN
I am an eighteen-year-old working girl. My job is making out income taxes, and do people really hate us! My hobby is collecting match packets. My pastimes are skating, dancing, bowling and football games. Would like to hear from Pen Pals between eighteen and twenty-four.

Kitten.

L-1745 CAN SPEAK SPANISH
I am a college boy of nineteen, six feet tall, have black hair and dark eyes, and am regarded as handsome. I have played the lead in several Little Theater plays and am awfully stage-struck. I speak Spanish fluently, play the piano and sing tenor in the college glee club. I like dancing and swimming. I'm also fond of riding and I own four thoroughbred horses. Please let me hear from all Pen Pals who would like to receive long letters and also souvenirs from a Southern gentleman.

Alan.

L-1746 LIVES IN THE OIL FIELDS
I live in the oil fields away from most of my friends. I am a blue-eyed blonde, five feet two and one-half inches tall and am fourteen years old. My hobbies are collecting picture post cards and photographs, and I like any kind of sport. I have so much energy and pep that people began calling me Dash. I'm said to be very good-natured. So anyone and everyone please write to me.

Blondie.

L-1747 PENNSYLVANIA GIRL
I am fifteen, five feet five, with medium brown hair and brown eyes. I am considered pretty, but I'll let my Pen Pals decide this, as I will exchange snapshots. I like to read good books and to go to see good movies. I like to hike and take snapshots of people at odd moments. My hobby is collecting movie star's pictures and I have around five hundred of them. My ambition is to be a nurse and I expect to go in training in three years. I would like to hear from Pen Pals from fifteen to seventeen. Come one, come all, you are welcome.

Susy.

L-1748 LONELY COUNTRY GIRL
How would you like to live way out in the country where it is very lonely? I am seventeen, have brown hair, dark brown eyes, am five feet four and weigh one hundred twenty-five. My friends say I am a cutie. I would like to hear from anybody anywhere, so write to a lonely little girl.

Kitty.

L-1749 A CITY GIRL, BUT LONELY
I'm just another lonely girl, feeling so small in such a large city. I'm five feet two, have brown hair and laughing brown eyes and am eighteen. I like to dance, read and write and would like to hear from boys and girls between nineteen and twenty-two. Please write and cheer up a lonely girl who truly wants some Pen Pals.

Fredda.

L-1750 GIRL FROM TEXAS
I am a girl of fifteen who likes to write and receive letters. I enjoy all sports and my favorites are dancing and skating. My hobby is collecting music and records. I am five feet three and one-half inches, weigh one hundred twelve, have brown eyes and hair, and am considered pretty. I live in sunny California but come from good old Texas. I would like to hear from Pen Pals between the ages of fifteen to nineteen.

Bob.

L-1751 WAITING TO BE DRAFTED
I'm a boy of nineteen and I expect to be called for the Army any day. My home is on a Nebraska farm and I often feel very lonely. I'm five feet seven inches tall, have brown hair and am considered nice looking. Roller skating, swimming and riding are some of the things I like to do. As a spectator I enjoy baseball.

Chick.

HERE'S THE
HOSPITALIZATION PLAN
YOU'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR!

ONLY 3¢ A DAY GIVES YOU THESE REMARKABLE BENEFITS IN CASE OF SICKNESS OR ACCIDENT

Hospital Expenses paid, up to **$540**
Doctor Expense paid, up to **$135**
Loss of Wages reimbursed, up to **$300**
Loss of Life By Accident **$1,000**
War coverage and extra benefits

Don't wait for trouble to strike! Many a man's savings of years have been wiped out by a few weeks of misfortune. Take out our liberal hospitalization policy now and know that your doctor and hospital bills will be paid. Only 3 cents a day gives you a freedom of mind worth far more. Individuals or whole families (to age 70) are eligible, and you may go to any U. S. or Canadian hospital, under any physician's care.

MAIL COUPON TODAY. No agent will bother you.

Family Mutual Life Insurance Co. P-10
Wilmington, Del.

Please send, without obligation to me, complete information on your Economical Hospitalization Plan.

NAME_____

ADDRESS_____

CITY_____ STATE_____

PLASTICS
TRAINED MEN NEEDED IN NEW ESSENTIAL INDUSTRY

Plastics, those new materials already indispensable in war production, are creating unlimited opportunities for tomorrow. Learn how you can train at home, in spare time, to enter this great new field. Write for FREE BULLETIN. No obligation.
AMERICAN SCHOOL
Dept. P749 Drexel at 58th St. Chicago 37, Ill.

Our Boys Give Their Lives to Insure Your Safety—
BUY WAR BONDS and Insure Your Future!

Asthma Mucus
Loosened First Day
For Thousands of Sufferers

Choking, gasping, wheezing spasms of Bronchial Asthma ruin sleep and energy. Ingredients in the prescription Mendaco quickly circulate through the blood and commonly help loosen the thick strangling mucus the first day, thus aiding nature in palliating the terrible recurring choking spasms, and in promoting freer breathing and restful sleep. Mendaco is not a smoke, dope, or injection. Just pleasant, tasteless palliating tablets that have helped thousands of sufferers. Iron clad guarantee—money back unless completely satisfactory. Ask your druggist for Mendaco today.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Classified Advertising

"Small ads" pay large returns. This magazine is just one of a large group of fiction magazines read by millions of people. Write to this magazine at 205 East 42nd Street, New York City, for list and advertising rates covering complete group.

Antiques—Indian Relics

Indian Relics, Coins, Curios, Catalog 5c. VERNON LEMLEY, OSBORNE, KANSAS.

Business Opportunities

MAKE MONEY at home by mail. JAMET, Box 1436, Long Beach, California.

Cigarettes

SAVE 50% on Cigarettes. Send for Free Catalog prices and trial offer. SIDNEY RAM, 59 West Monroe, M-38, Chicago, Ill.

Educational

CORRESPONDENCE COURSES and self-instruction books, slightly used. Sold. Rented. Exchanged. All subjects. Satisfaction guaranteed. Cash paid for used courses. Complete details and 84-page illustrated bargain catalog FREE. Write Nelson Company, 321 South Wabash, Dept. 218, Chicago.

For Inventors

PATENTS SECURED. Low cost. Book and advice free. L. F. Randolph, Dept. 573, Washington, D. C.

Nurses Training School

MAKE UP TO $25—$35 WEEK as a trained practical nurse! Learn quickly at home. Booklet Free. Chicago School of Nursing, Dept. D-9, Chicago.

Old Money Wanted

We purchase all Indianhead pennies. Complete catalogue 10c. Waltman, 398 Broadway, New York.

Patent Attorneys

INVENTORS: Learn now—without obligation—how to protect and sell your invention. Secure "Patent Guide"—Free. Write—CLARENCE A. O'BRIEN & HARVEY JACOBSON, 326-K Adams Building, Washington, D. C.

Photo Finishing

ROLLS DEVELOPED—25c coin. Two 5 x 7 Double Weight Professional Enlargements, 8 Gloss Deckle Edge Prints. CLUB PHOTO SERVICE, Dept. 16, La Crosse, Wis.

Poems—Songwriters

SONGWRITERS: Send poem for Immediate Examination and FREE Rhyming Dictionary. RICHARD BROTHERS, 30 Woods Building, Chicago.

SONGWRITERS—Write for free booklet. Profit Sharing Plan. Allied Songs, 204 East Fourth, Cincinnati, Ohio.

WANTED: ORIGINAL SONG POEMS. Five Star Music Masters, 620 Beacon Building, Boston, Mass.

SONGWRITERS! Attractive, convincing proposition. RAY HIBBELER, C33, 2157 No. Avers, Chicago.

SONGWRITERS: Send poems for offer and FREE Rhyming Dictionary. Phonograph records made. Vanderbilt Studios, Box 112-WM, Coney Island, N. Y.

Schools

WHY DON'T YOU WRITE? Writing short stories, articles, etc., will enable you to earn extra money. In your spare time we teach you to write, the way newspaper men learn—by writing. Free "Writing Aptitude Test" tells whether you possess the fundamental qualities essential to successful writing. Write today! Newspaper Institute of America, Suite 595-M, One Park Avenue, New York 16, N. Y.

LOVE SHORT STORIES

L-1752 TYPICAL HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS
Our tastes are typical of most high school girls today. We both like all sports, especially swimming, riding and hiking. We also love to dance. We're both fourteen years old, and Bonnie has black curly hair and sparkling brown eyes. She is five feet one inch tall. Terry has blond curly hair and big, blue eyes. She is five feet two. We would both like to hear from boys and girls between fourteen to sixteen.

Terry & Bonnie.

L-1753 FIEND FOR MAIL
I'm so crazy about corresponding and receiving letters that I'm a regular fiend for mail. Another one of the joys of my life is to make new friends. I am a business student and hope to be a secretary when I finish with my training. I'm sixteen, five feet two, and have auburn hair and hazel eyes. My favorite pastimes are swimming, reading and dancing.

Snooks.

L-1754 LONESOME PEN PAL
I'm a middle-aged man of good character, living in Washington, and have been feeling lonely. I'm five feet eight inches tall and of medium build. I like to do anything that is fun, and I think that includes letter writing. I'll answer all letters. How about it?

Al.

L-1755 SCHOOL BOY
I'm a boy of fourteen and attend junior high school in Utah. I like to draw cartoons and pictures, and also enjoy collecting pictures of airplanes. My hair is dark brown, eyes gray-blue, and I'm five feet five inches tall. I'd like to hear from boys and girls between thirteen and sixteen and will be glad to exchange snapshots.

Jack.

L-1756 COUNTRY GIRL
My hobby is drawing and collecting pictures of movies stars. I'm a girl of eighteen, and I live out in the country in Kentucky. My hair and eyes are brown, and I'm five feet four inches tall. Riding horseback is another pastime of mine, and I also enjoy skating, fishing and almost all outdoor sports. I'd like to make some Pen Pals near my age, so how about it, boys and girls?

Brown Eyes.

L-1757 SHE'S BASHFUL
Bashful! That's what everyone calls me. I'm a girl of eighteen, considered nice looking, and I've black hair, brown eyes, and am five feet six. My favorite pastimes are skating, reading, writing and collecting snapshots. Would you like to swap postcards, photos and souvenirs? You would? Then write to me.

Kitty.

L-1758 ANXIOUS FOR PEN PALS
Would you like to write to a fifteen year old redhead who is five feet five inches tall and has big brown eyes? I hope so, because I am that redhead. I love to sing, dance, swim and take long hikes. Letter writing is a very special hobby of mine. How about it, Pen Pals between sixteen and nineteen?

Red.

L-1759 EX-SOLDIER
I'm an ex-soldier of twenty-three, and I'm looking for Pen Pals. I'd especially like to hear from blondes, brunettes or redheads—so that must mean you! I'm six feet one inch tall, have black wavy hair and am fond of athletics. Football, swimming and hiking are some of the sports I like best. I will send snapshots to the first ten Pen Pals who write.

Rickey.

L-1760 TALENTED MUSICIAN
Before going to work in a defense plant, I made a living as a musician. I've been all over the United States and hope to entertain Pen Pals with tales of my travels. I'm a girl of nineteen, five feet tall, Irish, and have brown hair and blue eyes. I play the piano and bass piano accordion. If you're interested in music and would like to write to someone who can give you helpful information, just send your letters to—

Toby.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

PEN PALS

1761 FOND OF DANCING
If you would like to cheer up a lone- farm girl, just send your letters my way. I'm a of sixteen, five feet four inches tall, and have hair and eyes. I love all sports and have several ies, my favorite—collecting handkerchiefs. My e is in Nebraska, way out west. All letters will welcome and you can be sure of an answer.

Mel.

1762 PATIENT FISHERMAN
I'm casting my hook, line and sinker see if I can pull in some Pen Pals. I'm a young adian lad, with brown hair, blue eyes, and a not ugly mug. I've been through high school and had year of college and one of business school. I a variety of hobbies—collecting match booklets, vies stars' pictures, and snapshots leading the Besides my hobbies I find enjoyment in sports movies, and am an inveterate bookworm. How ut filling my mailbox, girls? With all my interests, should have something in common.

Chirpy.

1763 TEEN AGE ARTIST
I'm a boy of fifteen, and I'd like to respond with girls near my own age. Art is my by and I'm very interested in drawing and paint- I go for sports, too, such as baseball, basketball, ball and swimming. I'll be glad to exchange snap- ts but I'd better warn you, girls, I'm not too dsome. I have dark blond hair, hazel eyes and am feet one inch tall.

Bussie.

1764 YOUNG ARMY WIFE
I've been married since Christmas, 1942, my husband is in the Army and is away. I'm a of sixteen, a Hoosier, and I'm fond of dancing sports. I'm five feet six, have naturally curly r and blue eyes. Won't somebody please write me? Age makes no difference. Everyone is wel- ne.

Red.

1765 BROOKLYN GIRL
How about writing to a seventeen year girl who is anxious to make new friends? I am ve feet six inches tall and have brown hair and own eyes. My interests are singing, reading, danc- g and listening to the radio. I'd like to hear from en Pals near my own age and will answer every ter I get. Won't you please cheer me up?

Annette.

1766 NOTHING EVER HAPPENS
At least that's the way it seems to me. live in a small town in the heart of Dixie and there very little excitement here at any time. I'm a boy sixteen who is very interested in sports. I like wimming, fishing, and football, which I hope to play r my high school. I'd like to make some new friends, won't you be one? My hair is blond, my eyes ue, and I'm five feet six inches tall.

Shine.

1767 CALLING ALL PRETTY GIRLS
Pretty girls are my weakness and I'm oping to correspond with lots of them. I'm a boy of xteen, five feet nine inches tall, have brown hair and yes and I'm not bad looking. Since I'm a New orker myself, I'd like to hear from some girls from ıy home state.

Charlie.

1768 TALL AND ATTRACTIVE
How would some of you tall, sincere young men like to take a few minutes off and write me a letter? I am an office girl of twenty, with dark brown hair and very blue eyes. I'm tall, slim and considered quite attractive. I'm fond of movies, music, reading and all outdoor sports, and also love to play the piano and sing. I promise to answer all letters and will try to make them interesting. How about exchanging snapshots?

Sunshine.

Getting U... Makes Many

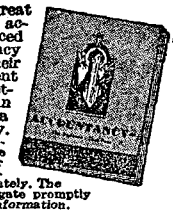
Do you feel older than you are or suf... Up Nights, Backache, Nervousness, Leg Pa... Swollen Ankles, Rheumatic Pains, Burning, ... frequent passages? If so, remember that your ... are vital to your health and that these symptoms may ... due to non-organic and non-systemic Kidney and Bladder troubles—in such cases **Cystex** (a physician's prescription) usually gives prompt and joyous relief by helping the Kidneys flush out poisonous excess acids and wastes. You have everything to gain and nothing to lose in trying **Cystex**. An iron-clad guarantee assures a refund of your money on return of empty package unless fully satisfied. Don't delay. Get **Cystex** (Siss-tex) from your druggist today. **Only 35c.**

Cystex Helps Flush Kidneys

NEW OPPORTUNITY IN ACCOUNTING

—and how you can take advantage of it

Never before, has there been as great an opportunity as now faces the accounting profession. War has placed on all executives the vital urgency of knowing all the facts about their business. Then our new government regulations force the keeping of better and more complete records in every office and plant. It is not a matter of choice—it is necessity. Authorities tell us the demand for competent accountants already exceeds the supply. This spells real opportunity—for those already in accounting, and for capable people who will start training immediately. The man or woman who is wise will investigate promptly —he will write for free booklet and full information.



LASALLE EXTENSION UNIVERSITY
A CORRESPONDENCE INSTITUTION
Dept. 10334-H CHICAGO

LEARN SWING PIANO

In a surprisingly short time! Swing fans now have the opportunity to study a unique and novel course and learn to play real professional popular piano. No student of popular music can afford to pass up this inexpensive opportunity to learn a system used successfully in private teaching for many years. You learn all your chords in the most varied positions and in all keys. Take yourself out of the amateur class! Send only two dollars and your first five easy lessons will follow by return mail.

GEORGE DICKSON SCHOOL OF POPULAR MUSIC
1601 South Third St., Alhambra, Calif.

MIND POWER

A FREE BOOK

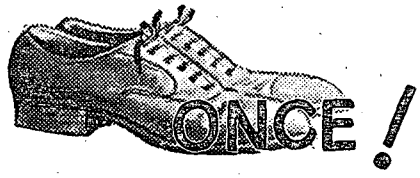
Develop your personal, creative power! Awaken the silent, sleeping forces in your own consciousness. Become Master of your own life. Push aside all obstacles with a new energy you have overlooked. The Rosicrucians know how, and will help you apply the greatest of all powers in man's control. Create health and abundance for yourself. Write for *Free* book, *"The Mastery of Life." It tells how you may receive these teachings for study and use. It means the dawn of a new day for you. . . Address:* Scribe Y. B. Y.

The **ROSICRUCIANS**
SAN JOSE (AMORC) CALIFORNIA

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

E OF THE NATION'S

BIGGEST MEN WERE IN YOU



MANY of America's production and research leaders have stood just where *YOU* stand today.

They knew—as *YOU* know—that *training* is required for success. They acted upon that knowledge by obtaining their training from I. C. S.

I. C. S. files bulge with the names of former students who are presidents, chief engineers or chief chemists of some of the largest steel, airplane, chemical, railroad and electrical equipment companies in the country.

Primarily, their qualities of ambition and intelligence were responsible for their successes. I. C. S. made its contribution, however, in supplying essential training. It can do the same for *YOU!*

I. C. S. does not pretend that it can make an intelligent, ambitious man of one who is neither. It can and does make *trained* men of those who are intelligent and persevering. Here's the coupon that thousands of successful Americans have mailed!

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS

HELPING TO TRAIN AMERICANS FOR VICTORY

SPECIAL TUITION RATES FOR MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES ★

BOX 3280-M, SCRANTON, PENNA.

Without cost or obligation, please send me booklet and full particulars about the course *before* which I have marked X:

TECHNICAL AND INDUSTRIAL COURSES

- ☐ Air Brake
- ☐ Air Conditioning
- ☐ Airplane Drafting
- ☐ Architectural Drafting
- ☐ Architecture
- ☐ Auto Engine Tune-up
- ☐ Auto Technician
- ☐ Aviation ☐ Aviation Mechanic
- ☐ Blueprint Reading
- ☐ Boilermaking
- ☐ Bridge Engineering
- ☐ Chemistry ☐ Coal Mining
- ☐ Civil Engineering
- ☐ Concrete Engineering
- ☐ Contracting and Building
- ☐ Cotton Manufacturing
- ☐ Diesel Engines
- ☐ Electrical Drafting
- ☐ Electrical Engineering
- ☐ Electrician
- ☐ Electrical Maintenance
- ☐ Foundryman ☐ Heating
- ☐ Heat Treatment of Metals
- ☐ Highway Engineering
- ☐ House Planning
- ☐ Industrial Metallurgy
- ☐ Locomotive Engineer
- ☐ Machinist ☐ Inspector
- ☐ Management of Inventions
- ☐ Marine Engines
- ☐ Mechanical Drafting
- ☐ Mechanical Engineering
- ☐ Mine Foreman
- ☐ Navigation ☐ Patternmaking
- ☐ Plastics ☐ Plumbing
- ☐ Public Works Engineering
- ☐ Pulp and Paper Making
- ☐ Radio, General
- ☐ Radio Operating
- ☐ Radio Servicing
- ☐ R. R. Section Foreman
- ☐ R. R. Signalman ☐ Refrigeration
- ☐ Sanitary Engineering
- ☐ Sheet Metal Work
- ☐ Ship Drafting
- ☐ Shipfitting ☐ Shop Practice
- ☐ Steam Electric ☐ Steam Engines
- ☐ Steam Fitting
- ☐ Structural Drafting
- ☐ Structural Engineering
- ☐ Surveying and Mapping
- ☐ Telegraphy ☐ Telephony
- ☐ Textile Designing
- ☐ Toolmaking ☐ Tool Design
- ☐ Welding, Gas and Electric
- ☐ Woolen Manufacturing

BUSINESS COURSES

- ☐ Accounting ☐ Advertising
- ☐ Bookkeeping
- ☐ Business Correspondence
- ☐ Business Management
- ☐ Cartooning ☐ Civil Service
- ☐ College Preparatory
- ☐ Commercial
- ☐ Commercial Illustrating
- ☐ Cost Accounting
- ☐ C. P. Accounting
- ☐ First Year College
- ☐ Foremanship ☐ French
- ☐ Good English
- ☐ High School
- ☐ Managing Men at Work
- ☐ Railway Postal Clerk
- ☐ Salesmanship
- ☐ Secretarial ☐ Spanish
- ☐ Showcard and Sign Lettering
- ☐ Traffic Management

HOME ECONOMICS COURSES

- ☐ Advanced Dressmaking
- ☐ Foods and Cookery
- ☐ Home Dressmaking
- ☐ Professional Dressmaking and Designing
- ☐ Tea Room and Cafeteria Management, Catering

Name.....*Age*.....*Address*.....

City.....*State*.....*Present Position*.....

Canadian residents send coupon to International Correspondence Schools Canadian, Limited, Montreal, Canada
British residents send coupon to I. C. S., 71 Kingsway, London, W. C. 2, England

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

There's a GREAT DAY Coming!

You'll wake up some morning with the last belligerent Jap gone the way of his ignoble ancestors. The shout of "Heil Hitler" will no longer threaten slavery and death for free people.

To hasten that day you accepted rationing of the miles you drive, the very food on your table, the fuel to heat your home in winter. *This, is America at war!*

From time to time, you may have found your Lee Dealer temporarily short of your favorite Lee Work Clothes. But you have been patient because you knew that somehow, the materials for the particular Lee you wanted at the moment had gone to clothe a soldier.

Until "The Great Day" comes, Lee Work Clothes will continue to fight on many fronts. In the meantime your Lee Dealer is receiving new shipments of Lee Work Clothes as often and in whatever quantities available after military needs have been met.

Now, as always, you'll find LEE is your best buy in work clothes. If your Lee Dealer doesn't have exactly the garment you want, he may have a different one suitable for your purpose. If you should happen to hit one of those rare times when he can't supply you at all, you'll be glad you waited a few days for the garment with this unconditional guarantee: "Your Lee garment must *look better, fit better, wear longer* than any garment you've ever worn . . . or you get a new one free or your money back."

Highest Quality
UNION MADE
Lee
Work Clothes and Industrial Uniforms

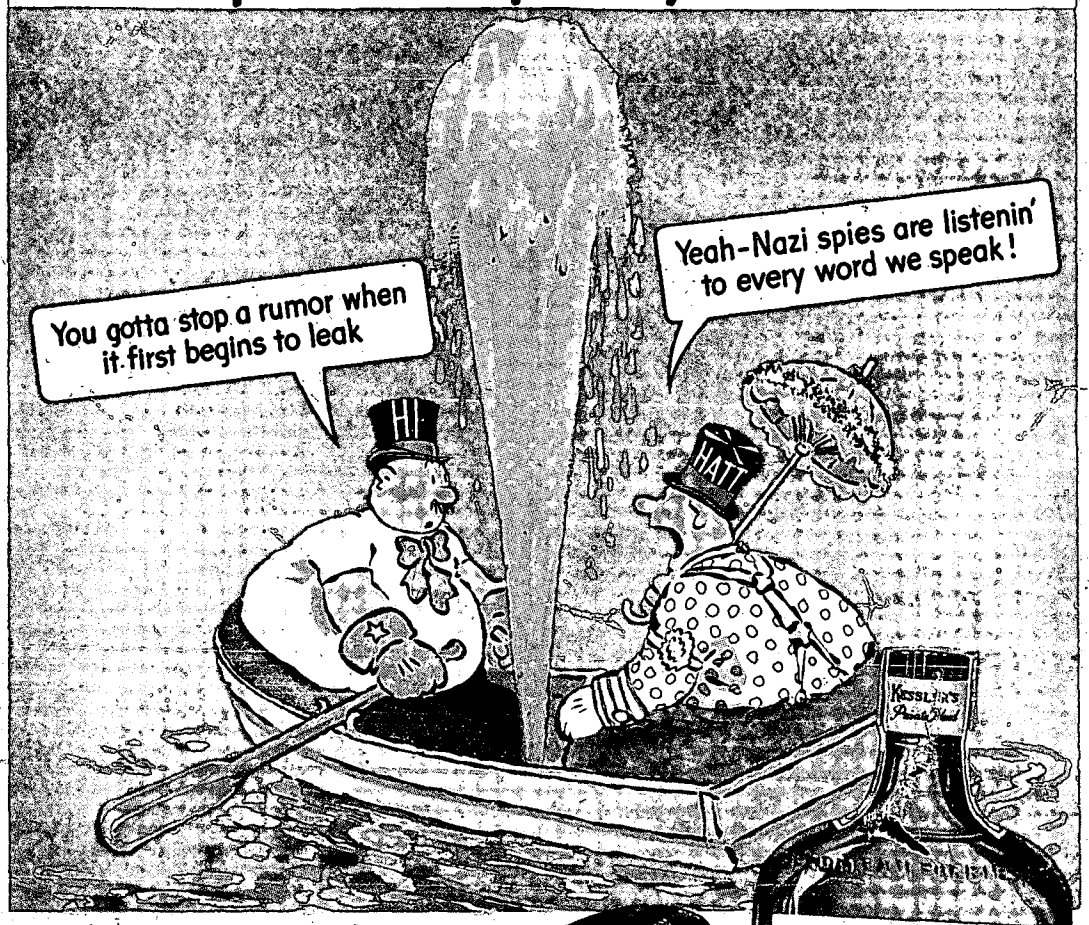
JELT DENIM OVERALLS • UNION-ALLS
MATCHED SHIRTS AND PANTS • WHIPCORDS
DUNGAREES • COWBOY PANTS
INDUSTRIAL UNIFORMS

IN PEACE OR WAR—THE LARGEST SELLING LINE OF ITS KIND IN AMERICA

Copr. 1943
The H. D. Lee Company, Inc., Kansas City, Mo. • Trenton, N. J. • South Bend, Ind. • Minneapolis, Minn. • San Francisco, Calif. • Salina, Kans.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Don't Spout Gossip!"—says HI to HATT



REEF YOUR TONGUE!

It's swell to have a lot of ships—
an' Uncle Sam has got 'em—
But just remember blabbin' lips
can send 'em to the bottom!
The Axis is deflated, an'
we're gonna squeeze it flatter,
If everybody puts the ban
on double-crossin' chatter!

(Signed) MR. HI AND MR. HATT

KESSLER'S BLENDED WHISKEY

KESSLER'S PRIVATE BLEND. 55% Grain Neutral Spirits. 85 Proof. Julius Kessler Distilling Co., Inc., Lawrenceburg, Ind

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED